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Misericords

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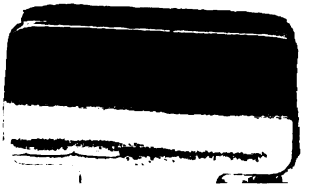

WOOD CARVINGS IN ENGLISH CHURCHES

I.—MISERICORDS

Printed at
THE DARIEN PRESS
Edinburgh

Chester Cathedral

WOOD CARVINGS IN ENGLISH CHURCHES

I.—MISERICORDS

BY

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"FONTS AND FONT COVERS,"
"WESTMINSTER ABBEY"

ILLUSTRATED BY 241 PHOTOGRAPHS AND DRAWINGS

HENRY FROWDE
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
LONDON, NEW YORK, TORONTO, AND MELBOURNE
1910

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PREFACE

In the year 1125, St Bernard of Clairvaux, writing to William, Abbot of St Thierry, asks:—

"What mean those ridiculous monstrosities in the courts of cloisters; those filthy apes, those fierce lions, those monstrous centaurs, those half-men, those spotted tigers, those fighting soldiers and horn-blowing hunters; many bodies under one head, or many heads on one body; here a serpent's tail attached to a quadruped, there a quadruped's head on a fish; here a beast presenting the foreparts of a horse, and dragging after it the rear of a goat; there a horned animal with the hind parts of a horse?"

It is a question which must have suggested itself to many, when surveying the wealth of imagery on a Norman doorway or the carvings of stalls and benches. What does it all mean? How did it get into churches of all places? And where did it come from? This is the first subject which is dealt with in this volume. To deal with it adequately would be to write a complete History of Ecclesiastical Zoology as it is set forth in the Bestiaries, the popular text-books in the Middle Ages; there is not room here for any such ambitious attempt. Yet even this brief synopsis of the contents of the Bestiaries may be of service; for the elucidation of the meaning and origin of the subjects represented on the misericords throws light on mediæval art in general; on the representations in stone on Norman doorways and fonts, on the carvings of Gothic capitals and arcading, on wall paintings, incised tiles, stained glass, and much else.

But the carvings tell us much more than what mediæval people thought about Birds, Beasts, and Fishes. They are a record of just what stately historians omit, and what it is of real interest to know; not the ways of courts and politicians, campaigns and generals, but the simple everyday life of ordinary folk; they constitute a History of Social Life in England in the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries as it was lived by common folk; a history which represents things as they are without the prejudices and prepossessions which so often make written record untrustworthy. What we see is an honest

transcript of what went on every day in the cottages and the streets, the fields and the woods; we see country folk ploughing, sowing, weeding, mowing, reaping, carting, threshing; fattening and killing the family pig, sheep-shearing, milking; we see them enjoying their sports and pastimes; we hear the alehouse jests, the wise saws and modern instances, hoary witticisms, proverbs and nursery rhymes. The limitations of their Bible knowledge and of their acquaintance with the legends of the Saints throw a curious light on the religious atmosphere of bourgeois life. Their opinions on music and art and dancing, on the high observances of chivalry, on the preaching and mendicant friars, on the mediæval doctor and dentist, find forcible expression. They are the censors of vice; no form of immorality escapes their lash. The carvings present to us a picture—realistic and true—of that history which does not find its way into books.

Nor is the work of the carvers to be neglected in a comprehensive history of English art. The art of the easel picture is a great art, but it is not all. There is another art; humbler it may be, but, unlike the former, indigenous, and that savours of the soil. Beginning with lovely illuminations of psalters and missals, it passes into the carvings of stalls and bench ends, and into popular chapbooks and almanacks. Many a figure scene on the misericords is well worth study, while from the carving of leaf and bloom modern designers might well take lessons.

The book is the first attempt, here or abroad, to deal comprehensively with the whole subject of the carvings of misericords. Being a first attempt, it is naturally imperfect. From limits of space, the treatment of the animals described in the *Physiologus* is very summary; an adequate account of any one of them would occupy more pages than it has been found possible to give lines. But all the more important sets of misericords have been studied *in situ*; and of these and of many hundreds of other examples, the writer has been supplied with photographs and drawings. Nevertheless it may well be that important examples have not come before his notice. Moreover, the interpretations given of the subjects here illustrated are anything but immune from criticism; the meaning of the representation is only too often obscure, and may be contested. There are also many examples not mentioned in the book which need elucidation. But at any rate something will have been done to help others in the way. For the benefit of those who may come across other examples not here classified and dated a special chapter has been inserted, in which are given the criteria from which as a rule the chronology of the carvings may be ascertained.

Owing to the liberality of many friends it has been possible to illustrate the book lavishly with photographs; in justice to them it should be added that photographs of misericords are taken under most difficult conditions; the high average excellence of the results is the more deserving of commendation. To reproduce the photographs the half-tone process is adopted; this necessitates loaded paper, which no one regrets more than the writer.

Of the mediæval misericords vast numbers have perished; *e.g.*, of those formerly in the quire of Westminster Abbey all but one have gone. The fine examples at St Nicholas, Lynn, were sold by the churchwardens in 1853; they are now to be seen in the museum of the Architectural Association in Tufton Street, Westminster. Advertisements of misericords for sale have appeared in quite recent times. Yet a large number fortunately survive. It is to be hoped that this book may increase interest in these carvings and arrest the work of mutilation and destruction. But decay is ever at work, and there is always the risk of fire, and wherever misericords remain, those in authority would do well to adopt the course taken at Beverley Minster, Worcester, Gloucester, and Ely cathedrals, and have every example carefully photographed.

As will be seen from the Bibliography, the literature of the subject is scattered over a vast number of papers and articles in the transactions of archæological societies, some of them unindexed, and many difficult of access; so far as the writer knows, all these sources have been examined. Mr G. C. Druce has contributed expert criticism to the improvement of the text.

At Ely and Worcester every misericord has been specially photographed for this volume by Mr G. E. Tyndall and Mr C. B. Shuttleworth respectively; and complete sets of photographs have been contributed of the misericords at Gloucester and Ripple by Mr R. W. Dugdale, of those in Chichester cathedral by Mr P. M. Johnston, of those in Chester cathedral by Mr F. H. Crossley, of those in Beverley Minster and St Mary's church by Mr C. Goulding, Rev. W. E. Wigfall, and Mr F. H. Crossley, and of those in Exeter cathedral by various friends. For photographs of misericords in other churches the thanks of the writer are due to Mr Harold Baker, Mr Oliver Baker, Mr James Barr, Mr E. M. Beloe, F.S.A., Dr G. Granville Buckley, Dr P. B. Burroughs, Mr F. H. Crossley, Mr W. Marriott Dodson, Mr A. Gardner, Mr S. Gardner, Mr C. Goulding, Mr Everard L. Guilford, Mr H. E. Illingworth, A.R.I.B.A., Mr P. M. Johnston, F.R.I.B.A., F.S.A., Mr W. Maitland, Mr H. E. Miller, Mr C. F. Nunneley, Mr C. H. Oakden, Mr A. Palmer,

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Exeter.
Faversham.
Fordham.
Gamlingay.
Gayton.
Higham Ferrers.
Irthlingborough.
Leighton Buzzard.
Lincoln Minster.
London, St Katharine's.
Lynn St Margaret.
Lynn St Nicholas.
Maidstone.
Malvern.
Manchester Cathedral.
Minster in Thanet.
Oxford All Souls.
Oxford New College.
Peterborough.
Richmond.
Rothwell.
Soham.
Sutton Courteney.
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Stratford-on-Avon

WOOD CARVINGS IN ENGLISH CHURCHES

I.—MISERICORDS

PART I

CHAPTER I

EASTERN MYTHOLOGY

THE zoological imagery of the Middle Ages mounts back to an immense antiquity. Some of it has been imported, almost unaltered, direct from the primitive myths of Egypt. The union of human bodies with the heads of beasts and birds is especially characteristic of Oriental religion. These hybrid creatures of fancy, whether the sphinxes which guarded the portals of the temples of Thebes or the colossal winged lions of Nineveh and Persepolis, originated in the priestly proclivity to symbolise and to express mystical esoteric ideas in material forms. So on Egyptian monuments Osiris and Typhon are seen determining the value of souls by weight, and condemning each, in accordance with the doctrine of metempsychosis, to be re-embodied in the animal form for which it had fitted itself by its manner of life in a previous stage of existence.* In Christian art the Archangel Michael and Satan are usually the protagonists in the scene, but at Autun and St Lo the scales are held by the hand of God reaching out of the clouds. At Bourges Satan is

* Professor Evans suggests that an independent origin of this representation is to be found in the warning of the prophet Daniel to Belshazzar, "Thou art weighed in the balances and art found wanting."

trying to cheat; he has put his foot in the scale, while one of his imps is pulling at it from below. In mediæval representations of the weighing of souls there are far more women than men waiting in queue; the mediæval artist never forgave woman for yielding to the suggestions of the devil and thereby bringing ruin on the whole human race; moreover he regarded her as still the most efficient agent in disturbing the meditations of pious men.

In Egypt again was celebrated on the 23rd of April the slaying of the desert-demon, Seth-Typhon, producer of drought, sterility and famine, by Horus, the vivifying and fertilising principle. Bas-reliefs in the Louvre and the British Museum depict the god as a mounted warrior thrusting his spear into the neck of a crocodile, the emblem and incarnation of Typhon.

Norwich Cathedral

The myth spread from Egypt to Syria and Asia Minor. Now in Cappadocia there was a canonised knight and martyr, St George. His festival is on the 23rd of April; he is usually shown as a mounted warrior, and as slaying not a crocodile but a dragon.* Plainly he is but Horus adapted for Christian use. From Asia Minor he was brought to Europe by the Crusaders, emblazoned on their banners. This is how England got its patron-saint in 1222.

* On one of the two columns of the Piazetta at Venice the crocodile is represented, but he is being slain by St Theodore, not St George. "Rahab," says Mr Ruskin (*St Mark's Rest*, p. 23), commenting on Psalm lxxxvi., "is the crocodile-god of Egypt, couchant on his slime, born of it, mistakable for it—his gray length of unintelligible scales, fissured and wrinkled like dry clay, itself but, as it were, a shelf or shoal of coagulated, malignant earth."

On Henry the Seventh's tomb at Westminster is a beautiful representation by Torrigiano of St Michael weighing a soul, while an imp below is trying to depress the scales.* On the misericords in Lincoln Minster there are two representations which may refer to St George: in one a knight is fighting a griffin; in a second a knight on horseback is spearing a dragon. Norman representations of St George and the Dragon remain over the doorways of Fordington, Dorset, Ruardean, Gloucester, and elsewhere. Our old friends the Lion and Unicorn are also of Egyptian origin.

Nor are there wanting survivals of a form of religion probably equally remote, that of Sun-worship. Christmas, Epiphany, Easter, Whitsuntide, the Midsummer Feast of St John are all

Westminster 1509

survivals of a solar or stellar cult. Most of all does this appear in the legend of the Phœnix.

The Phœnix.—She is fabled to live in a far-away Arcadia in the East till five hundred years are overpast; then she flies to Heliopolis in Egypt, where she sets fire to herself and consumes away upon the high altar of the Temple of the Sun (3). When the priest comes next day to offer sacrifice, he removes the ashes from the altar, and finds therein a small worm of exceeding sweet odour, which in three days develops into a young bird; on the fourth, in full size and plumage, she greets the priest with reverence and returns to her home. In Jewish writings the Phœnix is often mentioned. On Roman cinerary

* Illustrated in the writer's *Westminster Abbey*, p. 202.

urns, with peculiar appropriateness when the body had been cremated, she is often sculptured with the inscription DIS MANIBUS. She appears on coins of Constantine and the early Christian emperors. Hence the bird passes to the sarcophagi and mosaics both of Rome and Byzantium; for as Lactantius writes "she has gained eternal life by the boon and blessing of Death." Finally, since Phœnix is Greek both for the bird and the date-palm, the latter also becomes, by a "diseased etymology," a symbol of immortality. Therefore St Jerome and the Septuagint translate a passage of the Book of Job, "I shall die in my nest and multiply my days like a *date-palm*." The tree was fabled to die and then to spring up again like the bird. And so the exegesis of Psalm xcii. 12, "The righteous shall flourish like a date-palm," was that the righteous should win the palm of immortality. On early Christian sarcophagi, *e.g.*, one in St Apollinare in Classe, near Ravenna, representations of the date-palm are common. Sometimes both the tree and the bird are depicted. In the tribune of St John Lateran, Rome, is a stately palm tree on the top of which perches a phœnix.

CHAPTER II

CLASSICAL MYTHOLOGY

A FAR more important source of Christian symbolism is to be found, as was to be expected, in Classical mythology. In the early days of Christianity there was naturally much "accommodation." Deities and rites which could not be expelled forthwith were Christianised—coated over with an allegorical import. An especial favourite was Orpheus, from his descent into Hades to rescue his lost Eurydice. Even Bacchus and his train were pressed into Christian service; for Christ was the vine and the Church a vineyard; in the Christian mosaics of the tomb of Constantine's daughter at Rome is a charming representation of the vintage, with little Pagan genii treading the grapes. So Amor and Psyche became symbols of the love of God and the human soul. Theseus and the Minotaur appear on a mosaic in St Michele, Pavia, side by side with their antitypes, David and Goliath. The Labyrinth in which the Minotaur was killed was repeated on the pavement of many of the greater churches, being adapted for certain forms of penance; several examples remain on the Continent; among them is one, well preserved, in the Chapter house of Bayeux cathedral. The golden apples guarded by a dragon in the garden of the Hesperides typified the tree of knowledge in the garden of Eden. Mercury or Hermes is not only the conductor of souls, but, with a ram on his shoulder, represents the Good Shepherd. The Sibyls* were thought to have prophesied the advent of Christ, and become Christian prophetesses on Giotto's campanile and on the bronze gates of Ghiberti at Florence, and on the pavement of Siena cathedral. Virgil's Fourth Eclogue finds place in Christian sculpture.

The Peacock.—In the Imperial days of Rome the peacock was the sacred bird of Juno as the eagle was of Jupiter; the

* For a full account of the Sibyls in Christian art see appendix to Husenbeth's *Emblems of the Saints.*

former naturally became the emblem of a Roman empress, and the latter of a Roman emperor. After death empress and emperor became *ipso facto* deities; and side by side with the deified empress was represented a peacock. So the peacock became the symbol of apotheosis and of immortality. It is constantly found as a Pagan emblem on the tombs of the apotheosised, and on funeral lamps. Then it became a favourite Christian emblem of immortality; and in Byzantine art is exceedingly common. Hardly anything is more beautiful in the whole range of Byzantine sculpture than the two peacocks which may be seen in chancel screens in the Brescia museum and Ancona cathedral, drinking from a chalice the sacramental wine of eternal life. This use of the peacock as a symbol

Exeter

of immortality was aided by the belief that its flesh was incorruptible. "Quis enim nisi Deus," says Augustine, "dedit carni pavonis mortui ne putresceret?" Westminster Abbey possessed albs embroidered with peacocks. Now for the *significatio* of the peacock. First, it cries out suddenly in the night, says *Physiologus*, because it dreams that it has lost its beauty; thereby typifying the Christian who is in fear of losing grace in the darkness of this world. Secondly, it sometimes loses its tail, and in that case typifies the man without foresight; for its tail being behind is that which is to come, and foresight is the faculty of perceiving what is to come; and when the tail is lost, there is nothing to come; *ergo* no foresight.*

* Evans, 312.

Exeter

Exeter

Cartmel

On misericords in Cartmel priory church and Durham cathedral and New College, Oxford, are peacocks with tails outspread and crests upraised. The beautiful symbolism of two peacocks drinking from a vase has been mentioned above. The symbolism seems to have been extended to other birds than peacocks. On a misericord in Lincoln Minster the centre-piece consists of two birds, which from their crests may be peacocks, eating the fruit of the vine; while each supporter contains two tall birds, more like cranes, drinking from a fountain; the symbolism can hardly fail to be of sacramental import. At Exeter on one misericord two birds are turning their heads aside from a foliated branch; in another they

Boston

have turned round and are pecking at it (6); similar is the representation of the birds and the bunch of grapes on the twelfth century fonts at Winchester and Monmouth.* On a sepulchral slab in Bishopstone church, Sussex, is a spirited representation of two birds drinking from a vase. We may compare, but with doubt, the two swans eating corn in a sack, shewn on misericords at Cartmel and Beverley Minster.

The Siren.—"Syrens," says the *Physiologus*, "are deadly animals, with the upper parts of a man and the lower parts of a bird. And they make music and very sweet song, and by their dulcet voices charm the ears of sailors far away so that

* Illustrated in the writer's *Fonts and Font Covers*, 169.

Carlisle 1401

Ripon 1490

Ludlow

they become drowsy. Then when they sleep, they attack them and tear them to pieces. This is the end also of those who delight themselves in theatrical pleasures, which are tragedies and comedies and music."

In Isaiah xiii. 21 it is written, "Their houses shall be full of doleful creatures and *owls* shall dwell there and satyrs shall dance there." But where the Authorised Version has "owls," the Septuagint translates "*sirens*." Hence there was Bible authority for the existence both of sirens and satyrs. Ulysses is therefore often represented in Christian art sailing past the Isle of Sirens, symbolising the ship of the Church with the ears of its crew stopped to the seductions of the senses. But very early the ecclesiastical zoologists mixed up sirens and mermaids, quite perverting Homer's ancient tale. The siren often holds a fish in her hand. Now a fish is not only a monogrammatic emblem of Christ, but since, as Tertullian says, at baptism we are spiritually "born in water like the fish," it comes to signify in a secondary sense the Christian or the soul of a Christian. Therefore a fish in the hand of a Siren signifies the soul held in the grip of libidinous passion. Sirens are frequently represented in mediæval sculpture, *e.g.*, in the Norman work at Stow Longa, Huntingdon. In most cases they are represented as mermaids. At Carlisle (9) and All Saints' Church, Hereford, Mr G. C. Druce notes that the connecting link between the two forms is to be found in the fact that though the siren has a mermaid's tail, she retains the feathers and claws of a bird.

The Mermaid.—Of all subjects the mermaid was the most popular, partly perhaps because her curving tail fitted so gracefully the space on the misericord.* Normally she is represented with comb in one hand and mirror in the other, as at Cartmel and Westminster. To the mermaid all the attributes of the sirens were transferred; at Boston therefore she is represented charming by her music the mariners in a boat (8). At Exeter are two mermaids holding a tambour or drum over the head of a man with a distorted face; this is explained by Mr G. C. Druce by reference to the story of the sailor who was dragged down by mermaids to the bottom of the deep blue sea (7). There was not room for the whole sailor; so only the head is shewn. Here

* Mermaids occur on misericords at Bakewell, Beverley Minster, Boston, Bristol, Carlisle, Cartmel, Durham castle and cathedral, Edlesborough, Halifax, Hereford, Lincoln, Ludlow, Malpas, Malvern, Norwich cathedral, Oxford All Souls', Stratford-on-Avon, Wells, Westminster, Winchester cathedral, and elsewhere.

Norwich

Westminster

is a modernised version of the mermaid's exploits from an Anglo-Saxon Bestiary:

"In the sea are found
Wonders many.
The merman is
A maiden ilike
On breast and on body;
But from navel netherward
She is no man like.
Merrily singeth she
And hath many melodies.
Shipmen steering forget
For her many melodies,
Slumber and sleep
And too late waken.
The ships sink with the guile
And come up no more."

The moral is that men are like mermaids; they speak fair, but their deeds are evil. Sometimes, as at Exeter (7), the mermaid is represented with a fish in her hand; now a fish is equally the symbol of Our Lord, the letters of the Greek word for "fish" corresponding with the initials of "Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour," a Christian, a Christian soul, or souls generally; in the misericords therefore the fish in the grasp of a mermaid symbolises a Christian soul which has been caught by the enchantments of evil. A merman often accompanies the mermaid, as in Chichester hospital and Stratford-on-Avon. There may be here a survival of classical mythology, the reference being to Triton, son of Neptune and Amphitrite, who, according to Apollonius Rhodius, had the upper parts of a man and the lower parts of a dolphin. The explanation probably is that the artists, like Matthew Arnold, provided the mermaid with a husband by poetic licence. Mermaids are often associated with dolphins, as in a charming speech of Oberon:

"Thou rememberest
Since once I sat upon a promontory
And heard *a mermaid on a dolphin's back*
Uttering such dulcet and harmonious breath
That the rude sea grew civil at her song,
And certain stars shot madly from their spheres
To hear the sea-maid's music."

On misericords at Beverley Minster, Gloucester, and Ludlow (9) mermaids are accompanied by dolphins. The strange representation of a mermaid suckling a lion occurs on misericords in Wells and Norwich cathedrals (11), and at Edlesborough, Bucks.

Exeter 1255 - 1279

Lavenham

Chichester

The most famous literary tradition connected with the mermaid associates her with the Mermaid Tavern frequented by Sir Walter Raleigh, Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher, which was in Bread Street. Beaumont, writing to Ben Jonson, says:

> "What things have we seen
> Done at the Mermaid? heard words that have been
> So nimble and so full of subtle flame
> As if that any one from whence they came
> Had meant to put his whole wit in a jest
> And had resolved to live a fool the rest
> Of his dull life. . . . . .
> . . . And when that was done
> We left an air behind us, which alone
> Was able to make the next two companies
> (Right witty, though but downright fools) more wise."

The mermaid is the device of many families here and abroad. On the brass of Lord Berkeley at Wolton-under-Edge, *c.* 1392, there is a collar of mermaids over the camail. Sir Walter Scott employed the mermaid as a supporter, and Lord Byron as a crest.

The Dolphin.—This powerful swimmer, "most royal of those that swim," says Gregory of Nyassa, was of frequent occurrence both in Greek mythology and in Greek art. Among its special functions was that of bearing the soul across the sea of death to the islands of the blest; hence it was often carved on tombs. Dolphins are shewn on misericords in Beverley Minster, Gloucester, and Ludlow (9); the latter is a remarkably vigorous design.

The Centaur.—This composite creature is exceedingly common in Norman sculpture. Like most of the ecclesiastical monsters, it enters into heraldry also. The centaur is usually represented with bow and arrow, annoying the believer, at very short range, with "the fiery darts of the wicked." This Sagittary appears in the arms of King Stephen, and may serve to date the chancel arch of Adel church, and the font at West Rounton, Yorkshire. Usually the centaur is a personification of unbridled animal impulses and passions. At Exeter there is a male as well as a female centaur; and the former has transfixed a dragon which forms the left supporter; the dragon being an evil beast, the centaur here must be virtuous (13). In Philip de Thaun's *Livre des Creatures* Sagittarius as a sign of the Zodiac is said to symbolise Christ.

It was well known in Greek and Roman mythology. When

Chester . 1390

Æneas descends to the nether world, Virgil makes him see centaurs at the portals, with a host of other monsters:

> " Multaque praeterea variarum monstra ferarum,
> *Centauri in foribus stabulant*, Scyllaeque biformes,
> Et centumgeminus Briareus, ac belua Lernae.
> Horrendum stridens, flammisque armata Chimaera,
> Gorgones, Harpyiaeque, et forma tricorporis umbrae."

The centaur is generally represented as half man, half horse; but the *Physiologus* describes him as half man, half ass. He is seen on misericords at Exeter, Ely, Lincoln, Worcester, and New College, Oxford. Later examples sometimes quite desert

Beverley St Mary

the earlier representations; thus at Worcester one centaur plays the viol, and the other the cithern or guitar; and the latter creature has human arms and hands instead of hind legs. At Lavenham, Suffolk, are a male and a female creature; the latter has the fore parts of a beast, the former the hind parts; the female creature is playing the viol, the male is mocking her by playing on a bellows with a crutch for bow (13). At Chichester a centaur plays the tabor (13).

The Satyr and the Wodehouse.—At Athens, in the great dramatic contests, each writer was expected to produce a trilogy—viz., a tragedy, a comedy and a satiric drama. The chief actors in the last assumed the dress of satyrs or wild men of the woods, and clad themselves in goatskins, disguising their faces by rubbing them over with the lees of wine. In Roman literature and art also the satyr was one of the most familiar and popular personages. In the Middle Ages his appearance must have been familiarised to every one by the remains of Roman art. Moreover he was twice mentioned in the Bible. Isaiah says, "Owls shall dwell there and satyrs shall dance there" (xiii. 21); and "The wild beasts of the desert shall also meet with the wild beasts of the island, and the satyr shall cry to his fellow" (xxxiv. 14). After that no doubt could be entertained as to the corporeal reality of the satyr. But in mediæval days his classical origin seems to have been forgotten, and his name was changed; he is called a "wodehouse" or a "woodhouse," and is provided with a new history. It seems that the "savage man" lives in the deserts of India, where he has a horn in the middle of his forehead; this horn, however, is rarely depicted. He lives in high trees on account of the serpents, dragons, bears and lions which abound in those parts. He is naked, except when he has killed a lion, when he uses the skin as a garment; hence he is represented as a hairy man. Sometimes, no doubt, genuine "hairy men" turned up in the woods, where they had run wild; and it may well be that the wodehouse is but a representation of one of these, and not a product of Classical or Biblical literature. The wodehouse is a very common supporter in heraldry. In the East Anglian fonts of the fourteenth and fifteenth century the stem of the font is often encircled by small nude hairy men carrying clubs; *e.g.*, on the font of Saxmundham.* The wodehouse is very common on misericords, and is often engaged in combats with dragons and wyverns. In some cases, where a wodehouse is shewn, the reference may be to Orson, one of the protagonists in the late

* Illustrated in the writer's *Gothic Architecture in England*, 248.

Lynn St Margaret

3

mediæval romance of *Valentine and Orson*. At Chester two hairy wodehouses have wyverns for mounts (15).

Argus and Io.—Perhaps no Greek story would seem at first sight less suitable for Christian ermeneutics than that of the heifer Io guarded by the hundred-eyed Argus. But an illustration of it is given in the *Bestiary*,* with a most edifying moral. It does not appear in ecclesiastical art.

Argus and Io

Masks.—Masks of men and animals are very common on the misericords; the mask of the lion is the favourite, as the lion's head and mane, seen end on, easily lend themselves to decorative treatment. A fine set of masks occurs on the misericords of St Margaret's, Lynn (17). One particular mask, that with the tongue lolling out, is of exceptional antiquity; it is frequent on Egyptian monuments and is attributed by Sir Gardner Wilkinson to the god Typhon. It occurs also in Greek statuary, where an important variant takes the form of a Medusa's head. At Rome there was a special class of buffoons, whose mask had a wide mouth and a lolling tongue, probably worked with strings. This particular grotesque, therefore, such a favourite on misericords and gargoyles, may lay claim to a very venerable ancestry. But it can hardly have been necessary to borrow from Greece or Rome such an obvious grotesque motive as a grinning mouth with the tongue lolling out; it might be seen at every village feast where the country bumpkins grinned through horse collars, and would recur spontaneously as a promising subject over and over again in the long history of the art of caricature (60).

* Cahier and Martin, ii. 20.

CHAPTER III

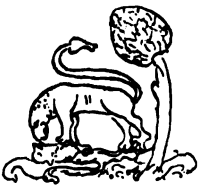
THE *PHYSIOLOGUS*

BIRDS, BEASTS AND FISHES

"The thought of the mediæval world made visible."

ANOTHER source of the ecclesiastical zoology of the Middle Ages is to be found in the works of Aristotle on natural history. He had been tutor to Alexander the Great. In his Indian expedition the latter sent him many specimens of Oriental fauna, and no doubt descriptions of others, which Aristotle studied from a scientific point of view. The mediæval zoologists, however, far preferred the marvels told of India and Persia by Ctesias and Megasthenes, and later the *Natural History* of the Roman Pliny, an encyclopædic compilation of current traditions and popular superstitions.

The chief text-book of the mediæval zoologist was Pliny's *Natural History*. Again and again, as will be noted below, *e.g.*, in the descriptions of the hart, panther, beaver, otter, unicorn, salamander, remora, elephant, dragon, Pliny's words are quoted almost verbatim. All that the *Physiologus* has done has been to add the passages in the Bible which speak of the animal in question, blending and reconciling as well as may be the Biblical description with that of Pliny, and then drawing an edifying moral. From one source or other, the early Christian zoologist had a plentiful stock of material. The Talmud had declared that "he who interprets the scripture literally is a liar and a blasphemer." Philo of Alexandria, half Jew, half Hellenist, had given an esoteric treatment to the Mosaic records. Origen recognised in the Scriptures a threefold sense, literal, moral, and spiritual. Origen positively denied that the Bible was meant to be understood in a literal sense. "He who is so stupid as to believe," says this great theologian, "that God planted trees in Eden like a gardener, and really put there a tree called the Tree of Life, is in danger of losing his wits." And



Lion

Tiger

Hart

Antelope

Eagle

Eaglets

Whale

Panther

Hyena

Otter

Raven

Partridge

Charadrius

Barnacles

Terrobuli

again, when commenting on the clothes provided for Adam and Eve after the Expulsion, "What old woman would believe that God cut the throats of animals to make skin dresses for them like a tanner?" It is from the letter, he says, that all the heresies come; the letter of the Bible is to be read only to get at the mystic treasures wrapped up therein. What was true of the Bible narrative was true of the Bible animals; they were "moral beasts"; and what was true of them was true of animals in general, and of plants too. When Solomon spake of all trees and of beasts and fowl and fishes, he did not write botanical treatises, but "moralities." And what was true of genuine, was true of imaginary creatures also; else the believer must have rejected the apocalyptic monsters of St John the Divine. All this was justified by such sayings as that of Job: "Ask the beast and it shall teach thee; and the birds of heaven, and they will tell thee." Gradually all this crystallised into a collection of some fifty moral beasts, called The *Physiologus; i.e.*, The Naturalist; or sometimes the Book of Beasts, or the Bestiary.

The *Physiologus* is at least as early as the fifth century, and was translated into Latin, Ethiopic, Arabic, Armenian, Syriac, Anglo-Saxon, and all the principal Germanic and Romance languages. Probably no book was so popular in the Middle Ages. And, unlike most literature, it was translated into dialect, and thus became everywhere the possession of the common people. Everybody knew the moral beasts; and a representation of one of them on a capital or a bench end, a reference to another in a sermon or a song, was caught up at once, and relished by man, woman, and child. That is why mediæval architecture, especially in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, teems with zoological sculpture, to us usually a mystery and sometimes an offence, but once a lesson understood and appreciated of all the common people.

1. The Lion.

Here are a few specimens of the *Physiologus*. We cannot do better than commence with the lion. No beast is of more majestic mien; whether he is as brave as he looks, modern sportsmen take leave to doubt. Anyhow he is of such an imposing presence that of all beasts he is the one most frequently depicted in wood and stone. But he had other and stronger

Exeter 1250-1279

Ripon

Manchester

claims on Art. What they are is set forth clearly in Theobald's metrical version of the *Physiologus:*

> "Tres leo naturas et tres habet inde figuras.
> Si venatorem per notum sentit odorem
> Cauda cuncta linit quae pes vestigia figit.
> Et quotiens dormit nunquam sua lumina claudit.
> Natus non vigilat dum sol se tercio girat;
> Sed dans rugitum pater ejus suscitat illum;
> Tunc quasi vivescit, tunc sensus quinque capescit."

So that the lion has three natures. The first nature is that if he scents a huntsman, he obliterates his footsteps with his tail. The foundation of this is doubtless the habit which everybody must have noticed in a caged lion, that he spends hours in nervously swishing his tail about. But the exegetist has a mystical explanation. "In like manner," he says, "Our Lord concealed all traces of His Godhead, when He entered into the womb of the Virgin Mary and became man" (23). The second nature is that the lion sleeps with his eyes open. So Our Lord slept with His body in the grave, but His spirit was awake at the right hand of God. For this bit of natural history the Physiologist was indebted to that very credulous person, Ælian. But when once accepted, it was easy to find support from Scripture; for is it not written in the Song of Solomon v. 2, "I sleep, but my heart waketh"; and in Psalm cxxi. 3, "Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep"? This second peculiarity of the lion makes him a symbol of vigilance, and so a brace of lions are very frequently carved in marble to guard with vigilance the portals of a church; *e.g.*, at St Zeno, Verona, and the cathedrals of Pisa and Siena. Says a mediæval poet, "Est leo, sed custos, oculis quia dormit apertis; Templorum idcirco positus ante foras." Sometimes, as on the Norman font of Eardisley, Herefordshire, he is represented with one eye open and the other shut, giving him rather a waggish look. In the carvings of the misericords the lion's mane is always emphasised that there shall be no mistake about his identity. A fine thirteenth century lion occurs in an Exeter misericord (23); others at Manchester (23) and elsewhere. But the lion has a third nature. It is an undoubted fact of natural history that the lion's roar is appallingly loud. Now why this so loud roar? Evidently it needs explanation, and it receives one. It seems that "the lioness always brings forth her cubs dead; but on the third day their father, the lion, comes and roars over them and brings them to life by his breath" (20). The evidence for this is a rather dubious blessing bestowed on Judah by Jacob in Genesis xlix. 9:

"Judah is a lion's whelp; he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion; who shall rouse him up?" Which things, says Origen in his commentary on the Book of Genesis, are very apt of Christ, "who was buried three days and three nights in the heart of the earth, till He had ended the sleep of death." Centuries later, Abelard, like Origen, gives the *Physiologus* as the scientific authority for his facts:

"Ut leonis catulus
Resurrexit Dominus
Quem rugitus patrius
Die tertia
Suscitat vivificus
Teste physica.

Thus the lion breathing over the cubs became, like the Phœnix and the Pelican, a symbol of the Resurrection. At Freiburg in Breisgau a stained glass window contains a painting of the Crucifixion; above it is a Pelican in piety; and above the pelican is a lion breathing on three whelps. Underneath the lion is the inscription, "Hi(c) Leo Forma S(alvatoris)"; *i.e.*, "This Lion is a type of the Saviour." *

So far the lion is a very good beast; all his three natures are very much to his credit. He symbolises the Lion of Judah, Our Lord Himself. Unfortunately he also symbolises the Devil, who "goeth about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." Moreover Daniel was thrown into a lions' den; and both Samson and David won renown for throttling lions. And it was written of the good man, "Because thou hast made the Most High thy habitation, thou shalt tread upon the lion and the adder; the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet." All this is very upsetting. A brace of lions at a church doorway may symbolise vigilance; but when they hold a lamb or a calf in their paws, as in some examples in Italy, they symbolise the powers of evil, compelled against their will to carry a church porch on their backs. The carvers at times found it very difficult, no doubt, to make it clear what sort of beast their lion was, a good beast or a bad one. The good-natured grin on the faces of the lions in the chancel screen at Torcello leaves no doubt in that case; compare the cheerful lions on the misericord at Ely (177); that at Exeter (23) also appears to be a well-intentioned beast; he is clearly the lion of the *Bestiaries*, and therefore is a symbol of Christ. Often the lion is simply the emblem of St Mark, as at Venice; and occurs with the other

* Evans, 83.

emblems of the Evangelists. A lion also used to visit St Jerome, where he sat in a cave year after year motionless in thought over his translation of the Bible; and so a lion is often shewn fawning on him, as in one of the statues of Henry the Seventh's chapel at Westminster.*

2. THE TIGER.

The story of the tiger and her whelps is first told by Pliny. India produces the tiger, he says, "an animal of tremendous swiftness. The hunter seizes the whelps"; (probably to be reared for the wild beast combats in the Roman amphitheatres); "he has to be provided with a very fleet horse, with another in

Chester 15th c.

reserve. When she finds her lair empty, the tigress darts forth and tracks them by the smell. When she comes up, he throws one of the whelps to her, with which she returns to her lair. Then she rushes back and he throws another to her; and this goes on till he reaches his ship" (20). On this the mediæval naturalists made two improvements. Noting that Pliny had stated that the River Tigris was so called because of its arrowy swiftness, and that the Tiger also was of tremendous swiftness, they naturally enough came to the conclusion that the river was named after the animal because of its swiftness. Secondly, instead of the hunter throwing down whelps, he successively throws down mirrors, and the tigress stops, paws a mirror and looks into it, and

* Illustrated in the writer's *Westminster Abbey*, p. 212.

thinks it is her cub she sees. Then a second mirror is thrown, and she lies down to suckle her reflection in the mirror. Meanwhile the huntsman makes off. In a MS. illumination quoted by Mr Druce * and reproduced by him, "the tiger's spots and stripes are well delineated, the former being painted in blue and white circles, the latter in blue and red wavy lines, while the mirror also reflects the colours of the tiger." Misericords at Boston and Chester (26) have similar representations.

3. THE ELEPHANT.

The elephant naturally attracted the attention of the *Physiologus;* more especially as elephant and howdah complete are mentioned in a deed of daring described in the First Book of Maccabees, chapter vi., when the Jews battled with King Antiochus, who had many elephants:

"And to the end they might provoke the elephants to fight, they shewed them the blood of grapes and mulberries. Moreover they divided the beasts among the armies, and for every elephant they appointed a thousand men, armed with coats of mail and with helmets of brass on their heads; and, beside this, for every beast were ordained five hundred horsemen of the best. These were ready at every occasion; wheresoever the beast was, and whithersoever the beast went, they went also, neither departed they from him. And upon the beasts were there strong towers of wood, which covered every one of them, and were girt fast unto them with devices; there were also upon every one two and thirty strong men, that fought upon them, beside the Indian that ruled him." The account goes on to relate how Eleazar Saravan "perceiving that one of the beasts, armed with royal harness, was higher than all the rest, and supposing that the king was upon him, put himself in jeopardy, to the end that he might deliver his people and get him a perpetual name; wherefore he ran upon him courageously through the midst of the battle, slaying on the right hand and on the left; which done, he crept under the elephant, and thrust him under and slew him; whereupon the elephant fell down upon him, and there he died."

Howdahs occur in Beverley Minster, Beverley St Mary's, Gloucester cathedral and elsewhere. In a misericord formerly in St Katherine's by the Tower, a princess with diadem and flowing locks is seen above the battlements of the howdah. The Elephant and Castle is a well-known tavern in South London, and forms the arms of the City of Coventry. The elephant from St Katherine's in the Tower is a very remarkable beast; he has the head of a hog, and is muzzled like a bear; while his trunk is of telescopic construction and issues from the middle of his mouth, where his tongue should be. In

* See his paper in *Archæologia Cantiana*, xxviii. 363.

Beverley Minster the elephant has huge ears curtain-fashioned, and is being whacked behind by an ape; the supporters are a lion and a camel. The Gloucester beast has the feet and tail of a cart horse and the head and ears of a bloodhound; from the middle of his mouth issues a flexible trunk fashioned like an ear trumpet. Of the various elephants depicted the best are those on the stalls of Ripon Minster and Beverley Minster (29), and on a misericord in Exeter cathedral, which is the earliest example in wood carving; the chief defects in it are that the tusks turn up instead of down, and that the legs, instead of having knees, have hocks like a horse; the last peculiarity is in accordance with the description in the *Physiologus*. Otherwise the representation is so accurate that it

Exeter 1255-1279

must have been taken from life, or from a sketch made from a living elephant; indeed the species can be determined; the great ears and tusks shew him to have been an African elephant. Now Matthew Paris says that the first time an elephant was seen in England was in 1255, when one was given by Louis IX. of France to Henry III.; and that people flocked to see it from all parts of the country. Of this animal Matthew Paris himself made a sketch in the manuscript of his History. It follows that this particular misericord cannot be earlier than the year 1255, and that the whole series at Exeter probably belongs to the third quarter of the thirteenth century. The sinister supporter of the Exeter elephant is the head of a citizen with close-cropped hair; on the dexter is the head of

Beverley Minster

a lady of wealth, wearing a head band and chin band, and her hair in a net; somewhat resembling the effigies of the late thirteenth century at Englefield, Berkshire, and Romsey abbey.* In some mysterious way the description of the German elk given by Cæsar in his *Commentaries*, vi. 27, seems to have been transferred to the elephant; both animals are stated to have no joints in their legs; (the elk does indeed move in a stiff and awkward fashion). Cæsar says:

"These *alces* or elks have legs without joints. They do not lie down, and if they fall, cannot get up. They lean against a tree when they seek repose. When the hunters find the place, they undermine the tree or else cut it partially through; then when the elk comes and leans against it, the tree falls and the elk with it."

All which, with improvements, is told of the elephant, and was long an article of faith. Shakespeare says, "The elephant hath joints, but none for courtesy; his legs are legs for necessity, but not for flexure." A fine account of the elephant as he ought to be is given in the old English Bestiary, quoted by Dr Oscar Clark. The poem begins with a description of the elephants in rich India, with bodies big as mountains

"On bodi borlic berges—ilike."

The rest of the description, summarised and modernised, is as follows:

"He hath no joints that he might rise with.
A tree he seeketh to
That is strong and steadfast,
And leaneth him trustlike thereby,
When he is of walk weary.
The hunter hath beholden this;
Saweth through tree and underprops.
Then cometh this elephant huge
And leaneth him upon his side,
Goes to sleep by the tree, in the shadow,
And fall they both so together.
He roareth rueful and help calls."

All the other old elephants run up to his assistance, but get him on his legs again they cannot. Then runs up a small young elephant:

"Running cometh a youngling,
Swift to him stoopeth,
His snout under him putteth,
And with help of them all
This elephant riseth."

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* Miss Clarke in her paper on the Exeter Misericords reproduces Matthew Paris' sketch.

And what is the moral? Adam fell through putting forth his hand to take the apple from the forbidden tree; therefore, as one writer succinctly puts it, "Adam fell through a tree." And as the elephant fell through a tree, he must typify Adam. Adam fell through a tree; Moses in vain and the prophets tried to raise him; a cry went up to heaven, and Christ came down to their aid; and by death went as it were under Adam, and raised him from "dim hell."

Another characteristic of elephants is that they are cold and passionless; and when they would have young, must eat mandrakes (Genesis xxx. 14). This again connects them with Adam and Eve, who were believed to have found in the forbidden apples the properties of the mandrake. Anyhow the elephant became a symbol of priestly chastity, and was often embroidered on chasubles.

4. THE HART.

In the Natural History of the Mediæval Church careful observation reveals here and there a substratum of observed fact, however minute; *e.g.*, in the description of the lion, the pelican, the salamander, the eagle, the whale, the serpent, the raven, the owl, the partridge, the antelope, the cockatrice. But when we come to the hart, we have a description which is remarkable not merely for its utter divorce from reality, but from the enormous mass of authority by which it is supported. Probably in the whole lengthy history of human error no better example can be found of the weight once attached to the argument from authority. In the first place, the hart loves solitary, rocky places; therein being a type of the saint who retires from the world to pass a life of purity and solitude in the contemplation of God, whether he retire to the desert, like the ancient hermits, or to the mountains, saying to himself in the words of the Psalmist, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help." Unfortunately, even in the solitude of the desert or the hills, the good saint does not leave evil behind; evil passions, evil thoughts, evil dreams, pursue him to his retreat, as they did St Anthony; in the very clefts of the rocks, and in the tops of the ragged rocks, these dragons or serpents of the soul have their abode, where they lurk in fear of the Lord (Isaiah ii. 21). What is the good hart to do in this invasion of dragons? It is only necessary to turn to the writers on natural history to know what he did. It will be enough to quote Pliny. That author says

that "the stag is of that class of animals which wages unceasing war with the serpent. Stags seek out the holes of serpents, and snort into them, and thereby force them from their retreats. For this reason the smell of burnt *hartshorn* is the only known specific for driving away serpents." Ælian, in his *History of Animals*, says the same. So do Zenophon, Plutarch, Lucretius, Lucan, Martial, Appian, Josephus, Tertullian, St Jerome, St Chrysostom, St Basil the Great, St Augustine, Vincent of Beauvais, Albertus Magnus and a host of others. No fact of natural history was more firmly attested. In early Christian days this subject was commonly depicted on the frescoes of the Catacombs and in very early mosaics, *e.g.*, at S. Clemente, Rome. There were indeed variants and developments of the story.

Ely

Sometimes the stag is shewn killing the dragon by the breath of his nostrils; so by the breath of the Word, which is Christ, evil is destroyed. But more often an alternative method of exterminating dragons finds favour. This is based on a verse in the Psalms which deals with Natural History and therefore had to be taken in account. David said, "The hart panteth after the waterbrooks." This at once raises two questions, first, Why did the hart pant? secondly, What did he want with water? It might be answered that he was thirsty and wanted to drink. But why was he thirsty? Comparing the array of authorities quoted above, the *Physiologus* convinced himself that the thirst suffered by the hart was caused by inhaling the fiery breath of dragons. The remedy evidently was to quench the dragon's fiery breath as soon as possible. Accordingly he went to a stream, filled his

stomach with water, and squirted it into the hole till the dragon was drowned out and emerged from his hole to be slain by the hart. This strange subject is constantly shewn in the illustrations of the Bestiaries (20). On the bronze doors of the cathedral of Pisa the hart is seen by a stream of water. So also there is a hart beside a pool on the supporter of a misericord in Beverley Minster. In some cases the antlers of the hart appear to burgeon into foliage. For this, as for the description of the elephant, Cæsar seems to be responsible. In his *Commentaries* (vi. 27) he says, "There is an ox having the form of a *deer;* from the middle of his forehead between the ears there rises a single horn, longer and straighter than the horns of any other animal we know, and *spreading widely at the top in palm-like branches.*" There is yet another very important fact of natural history about the hart which demanded explanation. He sheds his antlers every year; where does he get the new ones from? The answer is, He gets the material for his new antlers from eating dragons or serpents. On the supporter of an Ely misericord a stag with foliated antlers is seen devouring a dragon-headed snake (32). Being from first to last in conflict with the principle of evil as embodied in dragons, the hart is a type of Christ, slaying the principle of evil with the water and blood which flowed from his side; of whom it is written in the Song of Solomon, "My beloved is like a roe or a young hart." When represented with a crucifix in his antlers, the reference is to the huntsman saint of the Ardennes, St Hubert; there is a fine representation of this on the tympanum of the doorway of the chapel of St Hubert at Amboise. Being a quarry of the noble, the hart is a favourite in heraldry. The White Hart of Richard II. may be seen in Westminster Abbey in the Muniment Room and St Erasmus' chapel; and is the sign of many inns. A chained hart is a badge of Henry VI. and others.

5. THE ANTELOPE.

The nature of the antelope is that it has two powerful horns with which it saws through trees and fells them. So the devil cannot stand up against the Old and New Testaments. The basis of the story may be that some species of antelopes have serrated horns. Another fact about the antelope is that on the banks of the Euphrates grow shrubs of pleasant savour; if the antelope gets his horns entangled in their branches, the hunters

come up and kill him. So the Bible avails not the Christian who allows himself to be entangled in the thickets of lust and pride and evil passions; he falls an easy prey to the devil. The antelope is frequently depicted with his horns thus entangled in a thicket, while he is being attacked in the rear by a hunter with axe or spear (20).

Limerick

The antelope is common in heraldry. In Westminster Abbey an antelope sits at the feet of the effigy of Margaret Beaufort; and antelopes, collared and chained, occur on the frieze of Henry the Fifth's chantry chapel. On a misericord at Limerick is an antelope, collared, with serrated horns (34); at Ludlow is another, collared and chained.

6. THE EAGLE.

The Natural History of the eagle is based on three observed facts—one, that it has a piercing and unflinching gaze; secondly, that the sea-eagle lives on fish; thirdly, that eagles renew their plumage after moulting; a peculiarity, however, not confined to eagles. To these observations the *Physiologus* added Bible texts. The following is the Latin account of the eagle.*

"Dicit David in centesimo secundo psalmo: *Renovabitur sicut aquila juventus tua.* Physiologus dicit de aquila talem habere naturam. Quum senuerit, gravantur alae ipsius, et obducunt caliginem oculi ejus. Tum quaerit fontem aquae, et contra eum fontem evolat in altum usque ad aerem solis; et ibi incendit alas suas; simul et caliginem oculorum exurit de radio solis. Tum demum descendens in fontem, trina vice se mergit; et statim renovatur tota, et in alarum vigore et oculorum splendore multo melius renovatur."

It is written, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, who satisfieth thy mouth with good things so that *thy youth is renewed like the eagle.*" Therefore, he tells us, when the eagle has grown old and its eyes are dim, it flies upward to the sun till it has purged

* Cahier and Martin, ii. 166.

the film from its eyes; then plunges thrice into a spring of pure water, when it recovers its sight and renews its youth (20). We also, when the vision of God is obscured, must fly on the wings of the spirit to the Sun of Righteousness; and must dip ourselves thrice in the regenerating waters of baptism in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost; so shall we be born again and shall put on the shining raiment of the saints of God. Hence comes the magnificent imagery of Milton in the *Areopagitica:*

"Methinks I see in my mind a noble and puissant nation rousing herself like a strong man after sleep: methinks I see her as an eagle renewing her mighty youth, and kindling her undazzled eyes at the full midday beam; purging and unscaling her long-abused sight at the fountain itself of heavenly radiance."

Also the eagle can gaze at the bright sun without blinking, and carries the eaglets on its wings upwards and compels them to look on the shining orb; those who can do so with steadfast eyes it rears; but lets the others fall to the ground. So none can behold the face of God but Christ and His elect (20). This scene is illustrated in the Bestiaries,* and appears at Lyons cathedral in a painted window. Thirdly, the fishing eagle, poised high in the air, plunges down into the sea and emerges with a fish in its claws; the eagle is Christ, the sea is the world, the fish is the Christian whom Christ takes into the number of His elect. This is represented in the baptistery of S. Maria di Capua; on the jamb of a Norman doorway at Ribbesford, Worcestershire; on a metal plate in the British Museum; on a Celtic cross at St Vigean's, Forfarshire; and in a Celtic illuminated manuscript in Trinity College, Dublin.†

Frequently the eagle is the symbol of St John the Evangelist. Occasionally a double-headed eagle occurs; *e.g.*, on misericords at Boston, All Souls', Oxford, Whalley and Worcester. The spread eagle was the badge of the Holy Roman Empire. This has been thought to have reference to Elisha; for "it came to pass, when they were gone over Jordan, that Elijah said unto Elisha, Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee. And Elisha said, I pray thee, let *a double portion* of thy spirit be upon me." Sometimes an eagle is carved preying on a hare; as on misericords in the Architectural Association Museum, New College, Oxford, and Wells cathedral (108). This may refer to the hostility of the eagle to the hare as the emblem of incontinence; but may be merely a record of woodland life, the eagle being a hawk or falcon.

* Cahier and Martin, ii., Plates 23 and 28, and Male, 56.
† Evans, 118.

7. THE FOX.

The fox is one of the characters in the *Physiologus;* but has not yet gathered round him the delightful stories which were subsequently to be embodied in the epic of *Reynard the Fox.* "The fox," says the Latin Bestiary, "is a very crafty and cunning animal. When he is hungry and does not find anything to eat, he looks for a place with red soil, and rolls on it till he seems to be all bloody, and holds in his breath till he is quite swollen. Then, seeing him lying on his back all bloody and swollen, the birds think he is dead and settle on him to eat him. But the fox snaps them up."* This is the scene represented on the misericord in Chester cathedral (37); in the centre are the birds gaping at the fox, who lies on his back feigning to be dead; in the right supporter he has come to life, and is gobbling up one of them. The same scene is portrayed on the Alne doorway, and is inscribed VULPIS. The *significatio*, as given in an old English Bestiary, is that "He who tells idle tales and indulges in carnal pleasures pecks at the skin of the fox and tears its flesh; but the devil seizes the sinner and drags him down to murky hell." Here is Philip de Thaun's version:

> "Li gupilz signefie Diable en ceste vie;
> A gent en carn vivant demustre mort semblant,
> Tant que en mal sunt entré, en sa buche enferré,
> Dunc les prent en eslure, s'is ocit e desvure,
> Si cum li gupilz fait li oisel quant l'a atrait." †

But what endeared the fox to everybody, grown-up and child alike, was a simple episode of farmyard life, told again and again with ever renewed gusto. Chaucer's version of it is given in the tale of the nun's priest:

> "This silly widow and eek her daughters two
> Did hear the hens cry out and maken woe;
> And out at doors started they all anon,
> And saw the fox toward the forest run,
> And bear upon his back the cock away;
> Then cried they 'Out! Harrow! and Wely-away!
> Ha! ha! the Fox!' And after him they ran,
> And with their staves eek many another man.

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* Latin MSS. A and B in Cahier and Martin.

† "The fox signifies the Devil in this life. To people living carnally he shews pretence of death, till they are entered into evil, caught in his mouth. Then he takes them by a jump and slays and devours them, as the fox does the bird when he has allured it."—Wright's *Popular Treatises*, 106.

Chester 1390

Beverley Minster 1520

Carlisle

Ran Coll our dog, and Talbot and Garland,
And Malkin with a distaff in her hand;
Ran cow and calf, and eek the very hogs,
So were they feared for barking of the dogs.
They yelled as do the fiends yell down in hell;
The ducks did cry as if men would them quell;
The geese for fear did fly over the trees;
Out of the hive came forth the swarm of bees."

At Beverley Minster Dame Malkin is seen running out of her cottage after Reynard who has a fat goose on his back; on the right supporter he is feasting on the goose; on the left one two foxes are devising further villainy. At Ely the dame is belabouring a very small fox with a very big distaff. At Carlisle are fox and goose magnificently carved, with the smallest possible number of gouge strokes (37).

8. THE WHALE.

As regards the whale, there is a confusion of at least three creatures; one is the Whale proper; another is the Leviathan or crocodile; usually it is the Cetus, Aspido Chelone or Aspido Testudo, a huge sea monster to which all three names are applied.

Of the whale one nature is that he opens his mouth wide and a pleasing odour is exhaled and the little fish swim in, whereupon he closes his jaws and they are entrapped. There is of course a substratum of fact in the above characteristic of the whale. It is described in gruesome language in an old English Bestiary:

"When him in the sea
hunger afflicts,
the water-rager proud,
then his mouth opens,
a pleasant odour comes
from his inside,
so that thereby other
kinds of sea-fishes
are deceived.
Eager they swim to
where the sweet odour
cometh out.
There they enter
in heedless shoal,
till the wide jaw is filled;
then suddenly
around the prey
together crash
the grim gums."

The little fish are Christians who are led into vice by pleasing temptations: but comes the day of death, and with it the Devil, and

"When he his grim
gums dashes
after the death-pang
fast together,
Hell's latticed doors have not
return nor escape,
outlet ever
for those who enter." *

* Thorpe's *Codex Exoniensis*, 360.

Another nature of the whale is that he remains stationary on the surface of the water till his back is covered with sand, in which large forests grow. Mariners land, cook their dinner as on an isle, when suddenly the monster sinks down and in a moment they are engulfed (20). The whale is again the devil. This also is finely described in the Bestiary:

"Like is its aspect
to a rough rock;
so that imagine
wavefarers,
that on some island they
gaze with their eyes,
and then fasten
the high-prow'd ships
to that false land
with anchor-ropes.
On that island
they high fire kindle.
When feels
the skilled in guile
that on him the voyagers
firmly rest,
then suddenly
into the salt wave,
with the bark,
down goes
the ocean's guest,
seeks the abyss."

For the dimensions of the whale there was warrant in the creation of Leviathan, the vast Crocodile, as set forth in the Book of Esdras:

"Upon the fifth day didst thou preserve two living creatures; and one thou calledst Enoch, and the other thou calledst Leviathan. And thou didst separate the one from the other; for the seventh part, namely, where the water was gathered together, might not hold them both. Unto Enoch thou gavest one part, wherein are a thousand hills; but unto Leviathan thou gavest the seventh part, namely, the moist."

The whale rarely occurs on misericords; the artist no doubt finding it impossible to give an idea of its scale. There is one on a misericord at Bishop's Stortford; its rows of large teeth, however, look as if the carver knew more about sharks than about whales. A very fine whale is shewn on misericords at Ripon in connection with the story of Jonah (140).

9. The Panther.

The panther is a great favourite with all beasts except the dragon, which may be seen on the Norman doorway at Alne and on a slab in the wall at Newton, Yorkshire, flying away from him. The panther is a good beast; for Hosea says, but only in the Septuagint translation, "I will be unto Ephraim as a panther, and as a lion to the house of Judah."

Moreover his breath was so fragrant that hosts of beasts followed him, attracted by the aromatic odour,

> "A steam more grateful
> Sweeter and stronger
> Than every perfume,
> Than blooms of plants
> And forest leaves." *

Partly also they sought to be cured of their ailments by its healing qualities. For it is written, "Draw me; we will run after thee"; and "The smell of thine ointments is better than all spices"; and again, "Because of the savour of thy good ointments, thy name is as an ointment poured forth; therefore do the virgins love thee" (Song of Solomon i. 3, 4, iv. 10).

The breath of the panther is also likened to the virtue which went forth from Christ and healed the woman who touched the hem of His garment. The panther is a type of Christ, and its variegated skin of His wisdom, love, humility, mercy, justice and other attributes.

The Natural History of the panther is plainly a variant of that of Pliny, viii. 17: "It is said that all four-footed beasts are wonderfully delighted and enticed by the smell of panthers; . . . but when they have trained other beasts within their reach by their sweet savour, they fall upon them and worry them."

In the illustration the animals are seen following the panther, all except the dragon, who is flying away from him (21).

10. THE SERPENT.

The Natural History of the serpent is concocted out of various ingredients. First, the serpent annually sloughs its skin; secondly, it dances to the music of the snake charmer; thirdly, it is poisonous; but, fourthly, it did not sting Adam and Eve. In all which facts there are morals. First we are told that when it has grown old and its eyes are dim, it squeezes itself through a narrow crevice in the rocks and casts its skin. So we also have to pass through the strait gate that leadeth unto life. Secondly, some snakes are too wise to be charmed; being "deaf adders which stop their ears; which will not hearken to the voice of charmers, charming never so wisely" (Psalm lviii. 5 and Jeremiah viii. 17). So Christians should

* Thorpe's *Codex Exoniensis*, p. 355.

be deaf to the suggestions of the evil one (41). Thirdly, as the snake, when it drinks, leaves its venom in the pool, so we must leave behind all carnal sin when we drink of the fountain of eternal life. Fourthly, why did not the serpent sting Adam and Eve? The only possible reason is that they were naked. So nothing lays us open so much to the assaults of "that old serpent, the devil" as clothes and other such vanities of the world. The subject of the Temptation was a very great favourite in ecclesiastical art. But it presented a serious difficulty to the artist. For though the tempter is described in the Book of Genesis as a serpent, he holds a long conversation with Eve, as if he were a human being. Some therefore represented him

Attenborough

merely as a serpent; others made him a serpent with a human head, as may be seen on misericords at Worcester (131) and Ely (130). Here are some rather good Sapphics on the ways of serpents:

"Quaerit angustum lapidis foramen,
Vix movens sese veniensque tandem;
Inde pertransit, spoliatque carnem
Pelle vetusta.

"Si virum quemquam sine veste spectat,
Longius serpens ut ab igne cessat;
At videns illum qui fert amictum
Surgit in ipsum." *

* Harleian MS. in Appendix to Morris' *Old English Miscellany.*

11. The Beaver.

This animal secretes in two inguinal sacs a caseous substance with a pungent perfume, called *castoreum*, good for epileptic fits. For this the hunters chase it. So the beaver bites off the sacs and throws itself on its back to shew that there is nothing worth chasing it for. Which things are an allegory. "Do thou, O man, separate from thyself the works of the flesh, and throw them to the devil who hunteth after thy soul." The Natural History of the beaver, like that of the hart, is backed up by very weighty authorities, including Pliny, Ælian, Apuleius and Juvenal. A beaver is said to occur on one of the elbow rests and on a misericord at St George's, Windsor.

12. The Hyena.

This foul creature is represented, correctly enough, disembowelling a corpse; it signifies vice battening on corruption (21). Many other strange things are said about the hyena by the *Physiologus*. The hyena occurs at Carlisle (43) and Alne.

13. The Otter.

This creature is the enemy of the crocodile. The latter sleeps with its mouth open; the otter rolls in the mire till he is caked with mud, which he lets dry till it is hard; then he runs down the throat of the crocodile and gnaws a way out through his bowels. The same is reported of the *Ichneumenon*. But since the Greek for "otter," ἔνυδρις, also means "water snake," by a diseased etymology the creature is often represented as a serpent half in, half out the belly of a monster which the artist imagines to be a crocodile (21). In which case, like Jonah issuing from the whale's mouth, it is a symbol of the Resurrection. For the remarkable nature of the otter Pliny, Ælian and Plutarch are vouchers (43).*

* See Mr Druce's monograph on the Crocodile in *Archæological Journal*, June, 1910.

Carlisle 1401

14. THE LIZARD.

When the lizard grows old and its sight fails, it puts its head out of a crevice of the wall towards the eastern sun and regains its sight. So the dayspring shall arise to us with healing in its wings. Representations of a lizard running along a wall or peeping out of some chink in it, either sculptured in stone or carved in wood, occur in mediæval chancels, emblematic of the illuminating influence of the gospel.*

* Evans, 94.

Chichester 12[illegible]

15. The Dove.

A very curious and widespread belief associates the dove with the Incarnation. First we are to note that "The *Word* was made flesh." And at the Annunciation the Virgin had replied to the angel Gabriel "Fiat mihi secundum *verbum* tuum." But words are spoken to the ear. Therefore, says St Augustine, "Deus per angelum loquebatur et Virgo per aurem impregnabatur." * Another aspect of the dove is rendered on a misericord at Ely; in the centre is seen Noah leaning out of the Ark; the sinister supporter is a dove with a branch in its mouth; the dexter is a raven feeding on a dead bullock floating in the waters (134). Now the Ark is a symbol of God's Church tossed about in the tempestuous waters of the world. Therefore the dove symbolises the Christian who enters the Church, whereas the raven feeding on dead carrion symbolises the Jew who refuses to enter, and adheres to the dead ceremonial of the Law. In the same way the hyena, feeding on the dead, is a symbol of the Jews.

16. The Raven.

Its first characteristic—true to nature—is that the raven picks out the eyes of sheep and lambs. This is shewn on the right supporter of the misericord at Ely (134). Another characteristic is that, like certain other birds, young ravens are long in getting their feathers. The result is, says *Physiologus*, that their parents do not know them, and neglect them. Wherefore they cry unto God, and "He giveth food to the young ravens which cry" (Psalm cxlvii. 9). What sort of food is it? Naturally it is a shower of manna, such as fell on the Israelites in the wilderness. It is shewn in illustrations in the Bestiaries falling on a nest full of young ravens (21).

17. The Pelican.

The touching symbol of the "Pelican in her piety" † is exceedingly common both in religious and heraldic art. The

* In three manuscripts in the Bodleian the dove is spoken of respectively as *Columba Cristi*, *Columba David* and *Columba Noe*.—G. C. D.

† This expression appears to be purely heraldic and not to occur in ecclesiastical art.—G. C. D.

massive brass lectern in Norwich cathedral represents the pelican feeding her young with her blood; it occurs in endless profusion in the bosses of vaults, in stained glass, on misericords (*e.g.*, Ely, Cartmel, Lavenham, Beverley Minster (45), and elsewhere). It was the emblem of good Bishop Fox of Winchester; it appears in his great stone reredos in Southwark cathedral, as a cresting on his chantry chapel in Winchester cathedral, and on the top of a column in the centre of the quadrangle

Beverley Minster 15?c

of Corpus Christi College, Oxford, which he founded. The versions of the legend of the pelican vary slightly; sometimes she is represented as feeding her young ones with her blood; sometimes as restoring them to life. The one particle of genuine natural history in the legend is the fact that when the pelican is pluming her feathers, it is seen that at the tip of her bill there is a crimson spot. This of course has to be accounted for. The following is the explanation given by

St Augustine in his commentary on Psalm cii. 6, "I am like a pelican in the wilderness":

"The males of these birds are wont to kill their young by blows of their beaks, and then to bewail their death for the space of three days. At length however the female inflicts a severe wound on herself, and letting her blood flow over the dead young ones, brings them to life again."

This was superseded by the more elaborate story which appears in the *Physiologus*.

"Dicit David in psalmo ci. 'Simile factus sum pellicano solitudinis.' Physiologus dicit de pellicano quoniam amator filiorum nimis est. Quum autem genuerit natos, et cœperint crescere, percutiunt parentes suos in faciem. Parentes autem repercutiuntes eos, occidunt filios suos. Tertia vero die mater eorum, percutiens costam suam aperit latus suum, et incumbit super pullos suos, et infundit sanguinem suum super corpora mortuorum filiorum; et sic sanguine suo suscitat eos a mortuis. Ita et Dominus noster Jesus Christus per Esaiam prophetam (i. 2) dicit 'Filios genui et exaltavi; ipsi vero me spreverunt.' . . . Idcirco ascendit Dominus noster Jesus Christus in altitudinem crucis, et percusso latere ejus exiit sanguis et aqua in salutem nostram et vitam aeternam."

This version makes the children first strike the parents, who thereupon slay them; and a more elaborate symbolism follows; viz., that Christ was buffeted and scourged at His trial and was pierced with a spear on the cross, and from His side flowed the blood which redeemed from death the children of men. In a more general sense the pelican became the symbol of self-sacrificing love. In stained glass the pelican is often depicted in connection with representations of the crucifixion. Often too the pelican and phœnix are associated; the former symbolising Christ's death, the latter His resurrection. A hymn of St Thomas Aquinas speaks of Our Lord as a pelican:

"Pie Pellicane, Jesu domine,
Me immundum munda tuo sanguine."

"Most loving Pelican, Jesu Lord and God,
Cleanse me unclean with Thy most cleansing blood."

Dante too calls Christ "Nostro pelicano." Shakespeare revives the ancient tradition in *Hamlet*, iv. 5:

"And like the kind, life-rendering pelican,
Refresh them with my blood."

Here and there the pelican continues to be an inn sign, as at Speenhamland, of which Jekyl made complaint:

"The Pelican at Speenhamland
That stands below the hill
May well be called the Pelican
From his enormous bill."

18. The Owl.

The Natural History of the owl is correct enough as far as it goes. What it amounts to is that the barn owl catches mice, as appears on a misericord at Ely; and that the owl's eyes are adapted for night work, and she cannot see well by day, and is often mobbed by a crowd of impudent little birds; on the misericord at Ely the little birds appear in the supporters, as on that at Gloucester, in which she is surrounded by four chattering little birds. The mobbing of the owl is also well seen in Norwich cathedral (47) and Beverley Minster. We are accustomed to regard the intensely grave look of the owl as a sign

Norwich 1310

of wisdom; but to the ecclesiastical zoologist she was not a wise bird at all, but very foolish, because she "loved darkness rather than light." This symbolised the Jews, who were blind to "the dayspring from on high." The blindness and stupidity of the Jews was a stock article of faith. On the fourteenth century doorway in Rochester cathedral is a figure, which is blindfolded to shew that it represents the Synagogue or the Jewish Church. In a Latin poem earlier than the twelfth century the identification of the owl with the Jews is so complete that Christ is said to "have been put to death" by owls; "Christus a *noctuis* datur supplicio." The owl is so decorative a subject that she appears very frequently on misericords; she is present at the hanging of the cat at Malvern (191).

19. The Swallow.

The swallow was believed by everybody to hibernate all winter, and naturally became a symbol of the Resurrection. It was acutely noted by Luther that the statement of Genesis i. 21 that "the waters brought forth every winged fowl" was exemplified every spring when the swallow reappeared after its winter sojourn in the water.

20. The Partridge.

This little bird is curiously misused. It is the husband of one wife, and not only brings up its own family well but adopts any orphans that may be about. But the *Physiologus* knows better. Following the prophet Jeremiah, who had written that "the partridge gathereth young which she hath not brought forth," we are told that partridges steal the eggs of other birds and hatch them; but when the young are grown, they fly to their real parents, leaving their self-constituted foster-mother looking like a fool. So the devil gathers to himself the children of men; but when they have come to a knowledge of the truth, they forsake the devil and his works and flee to their natural mother, the Church.

One way to depict this subject was to represent the partridge sitting in her nest, while her foster chicks are flying up into the air to join their real mother. For the Natural History of the partridge there is only scriptural warrant; Pliny, Ælian and the rest are not in this instance responsible (21).

CHAPTER IV

THE *PHYSIOLOGUS* (*continued*)

IMAGINARY BIRDS AND BEASTS AND FISHES

21. THE UNICORN.

SUCH are a few of the characters of the "moral beasts." But the naturalist by no means confined himself to the beasts that are. Ezekiel in his prophecies, St John in the Apocalypse had depicted weirdest shapes. So also the *Physiologus* has a menagerie of strange creatures that never were on land or sea. Here are a few of them. We begin with the unicorn.

Two creatures are confounded in most descriptions of the unicorn, the *Monoceros* and the *Unicorn;* both the names mean "he that hath a single horn," the former being Greek, the latter Latin. In the Bestiary they are applied to quite distinct animals. "Monoceros is a great beast with a terrible bellow, the body of a horse, the feet of an elephant, a tail very like that of a stag; it has a horn in the middle of its forehead, which projects with an astonishing magnificence to the length of four feet, and it is so sharp, that anything that it strikes is easily pierced by the blow. It does not come alive into man's power, and it can be killed indeed, but it cannot be captured (alive)." This is the description given of it in a thirteenth century MS. (3244) in the Harleian collection in the British Museum; that in the Harleian MS. 4751 is practically the same. Of the Monoceros the creatures at Westwell, Kent, and Beverley Minster (50) are examples, as in other cases where it appears by itself. The Unicorn proper is the one which occurs in fights with elephants and in the symbolism of the Incarnation. Of the Unicorn MS. 3244 writes: "The Unicorn which is also called Rhinoceros by the Greeks has this nature; it is a small animal like a kid; it is most exceedingly swift; having one horn in the middle of its head and no hunter is able to capture it, but it is taken by this

Beverley Minster 1520

device."* The mode of capture is unsportsmanlike. "The hunters place a virgin near to the spot where it has its abode. When the unicorn sees her, it runs to her and lies down, placing its head in her lap, doing her no harm. Then come the hunters and kill it" (50). The unicorn is a type of Our Lord; for "He hath raised up a horn of salvation for us"; moreover the mighty ones of the world were unable to lay hold of Him, until He had abode in the womb of the Blessed Virgin. Here is the Latin *significatio* of the legend:

* I am indebted to Mr G. C. Druce for these two translations from the Bestiary.

Chester

"Sic et Dominus noster Jesus Christus, spiritualis unicornis, descendens in uterum virginis, per carnem ex ea sumptam captus a Judaeis morte crucis damnatus est. De quo David dicit, Et dilectus sicut filius unicornium. Et rursus in alio psalmo ipse de se dicit, Et exaltabitur sicut unicornis cornu meum. Et Zacharias dicit, Suscitavit cornu salutis nostrae in domo David pueri sui."

To this it is to be added that the single horn symbolised the oneness of the Father and the Son. "Likewise," the *Physiologus* goes on, "if she be not a pure maid, the unicorn will not sleep, but killeth the damsel who is not pure." The unicorn therefore is also a symbol of chastity. Another method of capturing the unicorn adopted both by huntsmen and by his enemy, the lion, was to retreat behind a tree; whereupon the unicorn charged

Cartmel

the tree, and his horn piercing it, he was held fast. This method was known to Shakespeare, who says that Cæsar

> "loves to hear
> That unicorns may be betrayed with trees,
> And bears with glasses, elephants with holes,
> Lions with toils, and men with flatterers."

This mode of capture is depicted at Cartmel (51). According to the Bestiary there was also great war between the unicorn and the elephant; for says the *Physiologus*, "the unicorn often has a fight with elephants, and wounds one in the belly and lays him low."

The Unicorn and Virgin are often represented. There is an

elaborate carving in wood in Breslau cathedral;* it occurs in stained glass in the cathedrals of Bourges, Erfurt and Lyons, and at St Redegonde, Caen; and on a late Gothic capital of St Pierre, Caen. In English work it is seen on misericords, twice in Beverley Minster, and once in the cathedrals of Chester, Ely, Lincoln, Manchester, and in Boston church, and formerly in the church of St Peter-per-Mountergate, Norwich; in Hargreave church, Suffolk, is a wooden unicorn. As we have seen, the unicorn is a symbol of Christ, and therefore is represented on misericords at Windsor and Durham castle chapel (52), trampling on a human-headed dragon or snake, in allusion to the Psalmist's words, "Thou shalt tread upon the

Durham Castle

lion and adder; the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet."

The enmity of the unicorn, the symbol of Christ, for the roaring lion which is the adversary, the devil, was depicted long before Christian days. In an Egyptian papyrus in the British Museum a lion and unicorn are seen playing at draughts; the lion has won and has picked up the money, much to the surprise of the disgusted unicorn; the representation is of the period of the Roman occupation of Egypt. On a stone coffin, *c.* 1200, at Clapton, Northants, a unicorn is seen attacking a lion, who has seized the unicorn's horn in his mouth. The lion and unicorn appear on misericords in Lincoln Minster and St George's, Windsor. Two unicorns were supporters of the

* Described by Mrs Jameson in *Legends of the Madonna*, 170

Scottish crown; after the union of Scotland with England the English lion, dexter, and the Scotch unicorn, sinister, became and remain the supporters of the arms of England.

Whence came this deep seated belief in the unicorn? Partly no doubt it arose in Egypt from reports brought by hunters of the rhinoceros. In Northern Europe it was backed up by actual horns, which were, however, those of the narwhal, an inhabitant of the Arctic seas, with a single horn from 7 to 10 feet long. Pliny is responsible to a large extent as usual for the popularisation of the story. "The unicorn," he says, "is a very fierce beast, with the head of a stag, the feet of an elephant, tail of a boar, and the rest of it like a horse, which has a deep roar, and has a single black horn projecting two cubits from the centre of its forehead; it is reported that it cannot be captured alive." The Christian unicorn is generally fashioned like a horse; but sometimes he is a composite beast, following Pliny's description word for word; *e.g.*, in the *Alexanderlied* of Pfaffen Lamprecht.*

Extraordinary value was attached to the unicorn's horn as an antidote for poison. Of it were made test-spoons for poison, drinking cups and salt cellars, many of which may now be seen in museums. A narwhal's or unicorn's horn was regarded as one of the chiefest treasures of Windsor castle. When reduced to powder, to be mixed with water and taken in case of poisoning, it fetched an enormous price. At Florence unicorn's horn was sold at £24 per oz., when gold fetched £2. 3s. 6d. per oz.; in the time of our Queen Mary it was a recognised article of import, and there was a duty on it of 20s. per oz.†

22. THE SALAMANDER.

The Salamander is a large lizard, the character of which is to put out fire by passing into it, its skin having the properties of asbestos. Thus it symbolises the Christian who passes unscathed through the fires of passion. There was Biblical warrant for the fable. Ananias, Azarias and Misael had come forth from a burning fiery furnace, with no smell of fire on their garments. The prophet Isaiah had said, "When thou walkest through fire, thou shalt not be burned." And St Paul wrote, "Through faith they stopped the mouths of lions and quenched the violence of fire." Here again the Natural History consists of a superposition

* Evans, 110.

† In the *Archæological Journal*, vol xli., is a paper by Rev. J. Hirst on "The Symbolism of the Unicorn."

of Scripture on Pliny, who says that "the salamander is a sort of lizard, which seeks the hottest fire to breed in, but quenches it with the extreme frigidity of its body." The salamander was the device of the French king, Francis I., and was carved in great profusion on his palaces.

23. THE REMORA.

This is a fish only a foot long; but when it attaches itself by its suckers to the keel, a ship cannot move. This was a useful property in a storm. The ship as usual is the Church, which Our Lord prevents from capsizing when tempest-tossed. Here again the story has no support except from authority, which, however, is of the weightiest. Ælian, Oppianus, Pliny, Suetonius and other writers, both Greek and Roman, delight in telling anecdotes of the powers of the remora. The remora, or as it is called in Greek, the echeneis ("He that stops the ship") was worshipped at Cnidus because when Periander was about to send a galley from Corinth to Corcyra to murder three hundred children, a great number of these fish fixed their suckers on the keel, so that the galley could not sail. On a certain voyage of the Emperor Caligula, a remora attached itself to the imperial galley and neutralised the efforts of four hundred rowers. And Actium was reported to have been lost because a remora stuck to Antony's galley and prevented it from going into action.*

24. THE CHARADRIUS.

This is a most remarkable plover. This is how it is described in a Latin Bestiary:†

"Item est volatile qui dicitur caladrius. Physiologus dicit de hoc quia totus albus est, nullam partem habens nigram. Si quis est in aegritudine constitutus, ex hoc caladrio cognoscitur si vivat aut moriatur. Si ergo est infirmitas hominis ad mortem, mox ut viderit infirmum, avertit faciem suam ab eo caladrius, et omnes cognoscunt quia moriturus est. Si autem infirmitas ejus pertinuerit ad vitam, intendit in faciem ejus caladrius, et assumit omnem aegritudinem hominis intra se; et volat in aera contra solem, et comburit infirmitatem ejus et dispergit eam; et erit salvus infirmus."

The bird is white, without a dark spot on it. When a person is sick, it is brought to his bedside to determine whether he will

* Evans, 125.
† Cahier and Martin, ii. 30.

recover. If the sickness is unto death, the bird turns away from him. But if he is to live, the charadrius looks steadfastly in his face, as is depicted on the doorway at Alne, and draws the malady out of him. Then it flies away to the sun with the *bacteria* of disease that they may be burnt up and consumed. So Christ turned His face away from the Jews, but had respect unto the Gentiles, and lifts up the light of His countenance upon them so that they be safe (21).*

25. The Cockatrice or Basilisk.

There exists a harmless little lizard which frightens its neighbours by puffing up the conical crest on its head. Out of this was developed one of the strangest of all mediæval monsters —the Cockatrice, whose life history was devoutly believed and recounted by Hermes Trismegistus, Pope Gregory, the Venerable Bede and a host of others. The manner of its generation is thuswise. It is hatched from the egg of a cock seven years of age, which egg is laid in the warmth of a dunghill, and there it is incubated by a serpent or a toad. When the period is accomplished, there comes forth a creature with the body and tail of a reptile, but in other respects it is like a cock. So terrible is the little creature that the most venomous serpent flies before him. Hence it is called "Little King," Βασιλίσκος or *Basilisk*. No sooner is it born than it hides itself. Such is its nature that if a man sees it before it sees him, it will die; but if it sees him first, he will fall down dead. It darts poison from its eyes and kills birds flying. Whosoever wishes to slay a basilisk holds before his face a crystal vessel; this not only arrests the venom, but causes it to be reflected and cast back upon the animal, which is thus killed by the recoil. Such being the qualities of the creature, one reads with new force the words of Isaiah, "The sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice's den" (xi. 8). And "They hatch cockatrices' eggs; he that eateth of their eggs dieth, and that which is crushed breaketh out into a viper" (lix. 5); also, "Out of the serpent's root shall come forth a cockatrice" (xiv. 29). Moreover Jeremiah says, "Behold, I will send serpents, cockatrices, among you, which will not be charmed, and they shall bite you, saith the Lord" (viii. 17). A famous story of the powers of the cockatrice is told in the *Gesta Romanorum*.

* Evans, 145.

Alexander was a mighty Emperor in the city of Rome and besieged a city of the kings of Egypt, in time of which besieging he lost many knights and many of his host, and that without wounds he knew not how, but suddenly every day they fell down dead. Alexander had thereof great wonder, and great heaviness withal; and therefore he let be brought to him philosophers, that were wise and expert in divers sciences; and he said to them, "Good masters, I pray you shew me how it is that my men die suddenly without any stroke or hurting." "Sir," quoth one, "it is no marvel, for there is a cockatrice within the wall; and as oft time as she hath any sight of your men, they be dead through the venom that passeth from her eye." Then said Alexander, "Is there no remedy against that sorry Beast?" "Yea," quoth they, "a good remedy. Set a bright mirror well polished between your host and the cockatrice; and then, when she look forth, she shall look in the glass, and her own beholding shall bow and pass back to her again, and she shall die and our men shall be saved from death." The

Exeter 1250-1279

Emperor did as the philosopher counselled him; and so anon, when the mirror was set up, the cockatrice was slain, and they entered into the city and won it.

The account of the cockatrice has special interest as shewing how such myths grew up. The story begins honestly enough with a genuine bit of observation of animal life; then the zoologist looks up the word "cockatrice" in the "Cruden's *Concordance*" of the day, and blends together as skilfully as he can the scientific and the Biblical account. The real trouble begins when he has to point a moral. But he rises to the occasion. The cockatrice of course is the devil; and there was no way by which Our Lord could combat his maleficent influence except by entering a vessel clearer than crystal, the body of

Our Lady, purest of virgins.* On misericords at Malvern and Worcester are cockatrices. On a thirteenth century example at Exeter a cock confronts a cockatrice; the asp and basilisk occur together at Amiens; Mr G. C. Druce suggests, probably correctly, that the Exeter group represents the mode of generation of the creature, the cockatrice on the left being hatched from the egg of the seven years old cock on the right. A cockatrice is carved on a bench end at Stowlangtoft, Norfolk. A very fine example is seen on a misericord in Henry the Seventh's chapel, as sinister supporter to a Phœnix; the dexter supporter is broken, and may also have been a cockatrice. Shakespeare has an allusion to the basilisk in his play of *Henry the Sixth*, 2, iii. 2:

> "Come, basilisk,
> And kill the innocent gazer with thy sight."

26. The Barnacle.

Of course the fable of the barnacle finds place in the Bestiary. Barnacles are geese which hang by their beaks from the branches of trees on the shore till they are covered with feathers and drop. If they drop into the water, they live; if they fall on dry land, they die. They illustrate the saving efficacy of Baptism (21).

27. The Terrobuli.

But all these marvels fade before the terrobuli; which, being stones, are nevertheless male and female. So long as they are kept apart, they are cold as other stones; but flames burst out if they are brought together. "Therefore, ye men of God, separate yourselves from women." Pliny appears responsible for this piece of Natural History. The terrobuli are generally represented as busts with a blazing fire between them, *e.g.*, at Alne. The Norman sculptures of the doorway of this church are particularly valuable, since the names are attached to each group. The word seems to be a corruption of "pyroboli," *i.e.*, firestones (πυροβόλοι λίθοι) (21).

* See Evans, 165, who illustrates a capital in the abbey church of Vézelay, on which is carved a combat between a cockatrice and a figure mounted on a dragon and holding in front a crystal mirror.

CHAPTER V

THE *PHYSIOLOGUS* (*continued*)

COMPOSITE MONSTERS

A LARGE number of the beasts of the ecclesiastical menagerie were made up by blending together parts of various creatures into a new whole, as had been done on a vast scale with the composite animals of Egypt, Assyria and Persia; there was plenty of warrant for these too in Ezekiel and the Apocalypse. Of all the composite beasts the most effective, decoratively, were the Dragon, the Griffin, the Wyvern and the Lindworm; and for that reason perhaps they occur with exceptional frequency.

28. THE DRAGON.

Of these, ecclesiastically, the most important was the dragon; the pages of Scripture abound with dragons; unfortunately, the Biblical descriptions are by no means consistent; one cannot even tell whether the dragons lived on land or in the water. Far more commonly, they are spoken of as land animals, who dwell with the owls in the wilderness. On the other hand David says in the Psalms, "Thou breakest the heads of the dragons in the waters"; and Ezekiel says, "Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I am against thee, Pharaoh King of Egypt, the great dragon that lieth in the midst of his rivers . . . but I will put hooks in thy jaws, and I will bring thee up out of the midst of the rivers"; here the allusion certainly is to the crocodile; for the Bestiary points out, quite correctly, that it is not so much dangerous with its teeth as from its habit of lashing out with its tail. As for the land dragon, he is described in the Apocalypse (xii. 3 and xiii. 1) as "a great red dragon having seven heads and ten horns." Moreover we learn from Deuteronomy (xxxii. 33) that his breath was poisonous, for it is written, "Their wine is the poison of dragons and the cruel venom of asps." Here the creature is

a snake, not a crocodile or a quadruped. To make matters still more confusing, there was an indigenous dragon, of Teutonic origin, depicted with great frequency in Anglo-Saxon manuscripts and other works of art, who differed altogether from the dragon of the Apocalypse. The artists had to make their choice then between native tradition and the Bible, and in this case they voted against the Bible. It became a canon that a dragon should have, not the seven heads of the dragon of the Apocalypse, but only one head. Mediæval folk had personal knowledge of dragons; many a district had been ravaged by them, such as that of Tarascon, where a model of the dragon still exists and is carried round the town in procession every year.* As all the dragons they knew had but one head, the dragon of art was

Cartmel late 14 C

given but one head, the Bible notwithstanding. In heraldry the type of dragon was standardised. He was made a quadruped, thereby being differentiated from the wyvern and lindworm, which were bipeds. He was given the wings of a bat; and his tail is serpentine, because the dragon was "that old serpent"; he has a fancy head, that of a beast of prey, with long ears. His characteristics are well seen on a misericord at Cartmel (59); and he is superbly drawn on one at Manchester, fighting a lion (23). He was a great nuisance to elephants.

* At Ghent is a copper dragon 10 feet long, reputed to be part of the spoils of Constantinople by Baldwin of Flanders; in reality it was made in Ghent in 1377.

The following is Pliny's account. "The elephant's blood is exceeding cold, and therefore the dragons be wonderful desirous thereof to refresh and cool themselves therewith, during the parching and hot season of the year; and to this purpose they lie under the water waiting the time to take the elephants at a vantage when they are drinking, when they catch fast hold of their trunk, and they have no sooner clasped and entangled it with their tail, but they set their venomous teeth in the elephant's ear and bite it hard. Now these dragons are so big withal that they be able to receive all an elephant's blood. Thus the elephants are sucked dry until they fall down dead. And the dragons, being drunken with their blood, are squeezed under them and both die together."

The earlier part of Pliny's description, like that of Ezekiel, is plainly reminiscent of the crocodile; but he blends with it characteristics of the python.

Cartmel Late 14th

As to the moral nature of the dragon, there can be no manner of doubt; he is "that old serpent, called the Devil and Satan"; and "Michael and his angels fought against the dragon." Therefore when a lion and dragon fight is represented, as at Manchester, it follows that the lion is a good beast, and does not symbolise the Devil who goeth about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. To make this clear, the Manchester artist has thrown into the lion-masks which form the supporters an expression of great amiability (23).

29. THE GRIFFIN.

This creature is also a quadruped, with the head, neck, wings and talons of an eagle, and the hind quarters of a lion; *i.e.*, he

is compounded of the noblest of birds and the noblest of beasts. Decoratively, he is an exceedingly valuable motif; a fine example is seen on a misericord at Cartmel, flanked by two grotesques (60). In heraldry the male griffin may be distinguished by the possession of two straight horns and a beard, as at Cartmel, and sometimes has spikes instead of wings. The example from a misericord at Limerick (61) is probably intended for a female griffin. Male griffins are seen in Alexander's flight to heaven (page 78). At Beverley St Mary two griffins are guarding apparently the Tree of Life; two frisking rabbits below give animation to the scene (61). The griffin is reputed in an old Norman-French Bestiary to be so strong that he can fly away with an ox: "Cil oisel sont si fors que il prennent ben I buef tot vif et s'envolent atot." The vast size of the

Limerick 15TH

Beverley St Mary

griffin was attested by the specimens of his horns preserved in the treasuries of mediæval churches, *e.g.*, Hildesheim and

the Dresden and Vienna museums. Being, as a matter of fact, horns of the Caffrarian buffalo, they are very large, and the griffin to whom they were presumed to belong would be a very big beast indeed. The griffin is an ancient crest of the City of London, and one still ramps on the site of Temple Bar.

30. The Wyvern.

This beast differs from the dragon chiefly in having only two legs; he has a beast's head, an eagle's leg and claws, and a

Carlisle 1401

serpent's tail, which latter has sometimes a ridge of knobs, like that of a crocodile; *e.g.*, at Limerick; he has bat's wings like the dragon. He is a great favourite on misericords, probably because it was easier to get in a two-legged wyvern than a four-legged dragon. Most of the story of the dragon seems to have been applied also to the wyvern; thus on misericords at Limerick, Worcester, and Carlisle (62) he is in combat with lions; at Beverley St Mary he is attacked by St George on horseback, at Beverley Minster by a wodehouse with club and shields. At Beverley St Mary's two sturdy wyverns turn aside, howling, from the clubs of two wodehouses. In the same church a wodehouse with a club tramples on the heads of two writhing wyverns, symbolising the triumph of Christ over the devil; the wodehouse

is flanked by two lions—in this case taking the side of righteousness—who pat him on the back (15); the hairiness of the wodehouse is rendered quite simply by a lattice pattern. The quality of the carving of these varies of course immensely, from the verve of such work as that at Carlisle (62) to the village carpenter's attempt at a wyvern on a misericord at Weston-in-Gordano, where, however, the artist has introduced a pleasing

Weston-in-Gordano

variation by giving the beast a head to look backward with as well as one with which to look forward; and by providing the latter with the barbed tongue of a serpent (63).

31. The Lindworm.

When a wyvern has no wings, as at Limerick, he is, in heraldry, a lindworm. The Limerick one has the horns of the ibex or the antelope. But no rigid distinction can be made between the dragon, wyvern, and lindworm; evidently their characteristics are to a large extent interchangeable at the pleasure of the artist.

32 VARIOUS BEASTS.

Time fails to tell of the many other curiosities of ecclesiastical zoology; the *Porphyrion*,* with one foot like that of a partridge, and the other webbed like that of a goose; the *Leoncerote*, offspring of hyena and lioness, with the body of an ass, the legs of a deer, and the head of a camel, and armed with terrible fangs; and the *Tharanda*, which has the shape of the ox and the fur of the bear, and changes colour like the chameleon; the *Manticora*, insatiable of human flesh, with the face of a man, the

Limerick

Limerick

eyes and mane of a lion, a scorpion's tail, and the flight of an eagle. Examples of human-headed quadrupeds appear on misericords at Worcester and Exeter cathedrals, Limerick (64), and elsewhere; but the details differ from one another as well as from those of the orthodox manticora, and they are probably but freaks of fancy. A curious lizard described in the Bestiary has been identified by Mr G. C. Druce at Limerick and elsewhere (64), as the *Amphisbæna*, a serpent which is mentioned by Æschylus, and which, as the etymology denotes, was able to move either forwards or backwards. To do so, he required a

* For the *Porphyrion* see Pliny, Book X., cc. 63-69.—G. C. D.

Halsall

All Saints', Hereford

All Saints', Hereford

head at each end, and in the Bestiary these heads are shewn confronting one another in close proximity (64).

In some cases, *e.g.*, on the misericords of All Saints', Hereford, the artist seems to have gone to the minor fauna for motifs, producing renderings, with detail of his own, of rats, mice, weevils, woodlice and other small deer (65).

PART II

"*Quidquid agunt homines, votum, timor, ira, voluptas,*
Gaudia, discursus, nostri est farrago libelli."

CHAPTER VI

TRAVELLERS' TALES

ANOTHER source of zoological inspiration was to be found in travellers' tales. These were to be found in abundance in Greek and Latin literature, in Ctesias, Pliny and others; and were capped by narratives of mediæval travellers, equally unveracious and acceptable. Many a one, like Othello, told of

> "Cannibals that do each other eat,
> The Anthropophagi, and men whose heads
> Do grow beneath their shoulders"

or on their navels. There were stories too, more or less well founded, of pigmies and other strange characters, both human and animal. These too found their way to the carver's bench, giving us creatures which are carved with such vraisemblance, that it might seem they really existed. Such are the delightful pigmies on misericords in the Architectural Association Museum (68), and the sciapod on a medallion of the façade of Sens cathedral, lying on his back and sheltering himself from the sun by lifting up a foot as big as an umbrella.

Further inspiration was to be found in the stories of monstrous births. A calf could not be born with five legs or a couple of heads without the most sinister prognostications. Classical scholars who have not forgotten their Livy know how Rome quaked at such occurrences. Hence that hideous monster, the *Monk Calf*, A.D. 1522 (69); hence probably another extraordinary

Lynn St Nicholas

Lynn St Nicholas

Lynn St Nicholas

freak, the *Papal Ass* (69). Weird creatures also were reported to have been caught at sea; *e.g.*, the *Sea Bishop*, A.D. 1453, with mitre, crosier and dalmatic. A venerable grey seal could not poke its head up out of the Baltic but it was promptly dubbed a *Merman* or *Mermonk*.

Incredible, nowadays, the state of mind may seem which invented or believed such a farrago of nonsense. But the whole world was inconceivably credulous and uncritical, in theology and science alike; its judgments on the canonicity of the Scriptures and the dogmas of the Faith as lacking in logic

Monk Calf

Papal Ass

and scholarship and authority as its fables of the birds and beasts and fishes. In all departments of thought and knowledge "*omne mirabile pro probabili*" was accepted as quite a fair canon of logic. The greatest thinkers of the early days of Christianity, Clement of Alexandria, Augustine, Origen, Chrysostom, Jerome, as well as the greatest theologians of the Middle Ages, alike gave their support to the extraordinary rubbish which passed as Natural History. Their canon of evidence was that of Tertullian, "Credo quia absurdum." *

* See Evans, 176.

CHAPTER VII

MEDIÆVAL ROMANCES

1. Reynard the Fox.

Many of the carvings of the misericords represent scenes which occur in mediæval romances, especially the most ancient and most popular of them all, that of Reynard the Fox. As early as the seventh century the Frankish historian, Fredegarius, recounts a fable in which the fox appears as an important personage in the court of the lion; the same fable is repeated by a Bavarian writer in the tenth century. Early in the twelfth century Guibert de Nogent alludes to the personages in the romance by the names by which they are afterwards always designated; Reynard is the Fox, Isengrin is the wolf, Teburg the cat, Bernard the ass, Brichemer the stag, Belin the ram, Petitpas the peacock, and so on. Later in the century a collection of fables was composed in Latin by Odo de Cirington. One of them was about Isengrin, who wanted to be a monk, and was sent to school with the novices. But instead of "paternoster," he could not be got to say anything but "lamb," "ram." And when in church, instead of being intent on the rood or the altar, his gaze was always roving out of doors towards the green wood for lambs and rams.* Says an old English poem in alliterative verse:

"Though thou the hoary wolf
Consecrate to priest,
Though thou him set to school
His psalms to learn,
Ever his eyes will turn
To the green wood."

The romance of Reynard the Fox must have been very familiar in England from early times, but there is said to have been no English version of it till Caxton's edition. Reprints kept appearing right on to the nineteenth century.†

* Wright's *Caricature*, 75.

† A charming metrical version, illustrated, of *Reynard the Fox*, by Mr F. S. Ellis, was published in London, 1894.

The main plot of the *Roman de Renart* is concerned with the long struggle between Reynard and Isengrin, between the fox as impersonating mental ability and the wolf as representing brute force. Though frequently reduced to the greatest straits by the power of Isengrin, Reynard generally gets the better of him in the end; robs him and brings on him every sort of danger and suffering, for which the latter never succeeds in obtaining justice. There are many other diverting episodes; for nearly everybody falls a victim to Reynard's cunning; the

Bristol

bear, the cat and the rest all suffer in turn. Perhaps the most complete sets of representations is that to be seen on the misericords in Bristol cathedral. One of them commemorates the occasion when Reynard for his sins had been summoned to court by King Lion, and Bruin the Bear was sent to fetch him (71).

"Now when Bruin came to Reynard's house, Malepardus by name, the fox told him of much honey which was in a cleft oak in the yard of the carpenter, Lanfert. Bruin pushed his head and shoulders into the cleft oak,

Bristol

Bristol

when the wedges in it dropped out and he was pinned tight, and howled and roared so that all the parish ran thither with goads, rakes, and broomsticks; the Priest with the shaft of the cross, the parish clerk with the holy-water-sprinkler, and the Priest's wife, Dame Jullock, with her distaff; and all these belaboured the bear, and poor Bruin in this massacre sat and sighed extremely, groaning under the burden of their strokes."

Another episode tells the sad things that befel poor Tybert (72).

"Then Reynard took Tybert the Cat to the Priest's barn, which was well walled about with a mud wall, where but the night before the Fox had broken in, and stole from the Priest an exceeding fat hen; at which the Priest

Bristol 15?c

was so angry that he had set a gin before the hole. Therefore, said Reynard to the Cat, 'Creep in at this hole and believe it you shall not tarry a minute's space, but you shall have more mice than you are able to devour; hark, you may hear them squeak.' So the Cat sprang quickly into the hole, but was immediately caught by the neck in the gin, and was half strangled so that he began to struggle and cry out. Then said Reynard, 'Methinks you sing at your meat.' But all this while the Cat was fast, and mewed so piteously and loud that Martinet leapt out of his bed and cried to his people, 'Arise, for the thief is taken that hath stolen our hens.' Which words awakened the Priest, and he also arose, all stark naked, and coming first to Tybert, smote him with a great staff, and after him many others with Dame Jullock his wife. But the Cat perceiving death so near him, in a desperate mood

leapt between the Priest's legs and with claws and teeth fastened on him and mauled him grievously. All this while Reynard stood before the hole, and laughed so extremely that his body was like to break."

At last retribution overtook Reynard, and he was condemned to death for his sins, to the great delight of his ancient victims, Isengrin and Bruin, who are seen executing a dance of triumph to the music of a tabor played by an ape (73). The next scene shews the gallows erected. On the right King Noble and the Queen look on; on the left the bear, the wolf and the goose, with the squirrel at the top, are ready to haul at the rope (broken off) which has been brought by Tybert the Cat, who is in the

Bristol

centre. But Reynard made such a plausible death-bed confession that the King and Queen grant him a reprieve (74). This hanging scene was a very great favourite, and is repeated again and again on the misericords. At Bristol two geese are hauling the rope taut, while a third is hanging on to Reynard's tail to accelerate strangulation. At Beverley geese on the left hold sword and mace, being officials in charge of the execution; in the right supporter an ape is removing the noose from his friend's neck; in the left one a fox has come upon two geese asleep (75). The story of Reynard is carved on the base of the central pillar of Salisbury Chapter House; and four geese are

Beverley Minster 1520

shewn hanging Reynard on a boss of the cloister of Canterbury cathedral; on a faldstool in Sherborne Minster he is being hanged by four geese, while on either side a monk, book in hand, performs the last sad service for him.

2. SHIFTS OF REYNARDINE.

A romance of similar tenor is entitled *Shifts of Reynardine, the son of Reynard the Fox.** In one of these "shifts" Zani, the ape, recommends Reynard to turn doctor, and promises to

* Two editions of this were printed in London in 1684.

Manchester

supply him with all the necessary articles. "Leave that to me," said the Ape. "Not long ago I, with my companions, going out for a frolic, found a Pedlar asleep with his pack lying by him. This pack we took away, and equally as we could divided all the wares amongst us. By this means I am stored with razors, lancets, scissors, &c."* This scene occurs in Beverley Minster and Manchester (75). In another "shift" Reynardine enters a convent and assumes monastic garb, but having stolen a carp from the kitchen is enjoined to fast two days by way of penance. Whereon he made his escape, and seeing some geese in a pond, he begins to read in a loud voice. The silly geese leave the pond to listen to him and he snaps them up; this occurs, with variations, on a misericord at Kempen.

Chester

3. Sir Yvain.

Another popular romance of thirteenth century date, tells how Sir Yvain, on horseback, pursued a certain knight. The latter, however, galloped across the drawbridge beneath the portcullis and took refuge in a castle. Sir Yvain galloped after him, but as he rode in, the portcullis was let drop, and fell on the hind quarters of his charger, impaling it. Sir Yvain was thrown into the castle yard and was taken prisoner. But a certain damsel shewed him a postern and he was a free man

* *Clifton Antiquarian Club*, i. 245.

again. The critical moment when the portcullis has fallen on Sir Yvain's horse is shewn in misericords in Boston church, Chester and Lincoln cathedrals, and New College, Oxford; and formerly in St Peter-per-Mountergate, Norwich (76).

4. SWAN AND BOAT.

Another favourite legend, found in various forms in different countries, was the *Chevalier au Cygne*. On one of the misericords at Exeter is seen a knight in a boat drawn over the sea

Exeter 1255 1279

by a swan; the flat-topped helmet of the knight points to a date not later than the thirteenth century (77). In Norske mythology whenever a hero is drawn by a swan or rides on a swan, the import is that he is traversing the sea of death, returning to the kingdom of the San Graal. The valkyries who received heroes after death had the power of transforming themselves into swans; and the goddess Freya, one of whose functions it was to receive the souls of dead maidens, had swan's feet.* The idea is familiar in Wagner's opera *Lohengrin*. It appears in various forms. One of them is the subject of a poem, *Rudiger*, by Southey; another is related by Snowe in *Rhine Legends*, 437.

* Miss Kate M. Clarke, xxxix. 237.

5. The Lathom Legend.

In many families there was a story of a baby which had been carried off by an eagle, but which lived and grew up to inherit the family title. On a misericord at Manchester cathedral, in the centre, is a tall tree containing the eagle's nest; in the nest is a child gripped by an eagle; woodmen with axes and wallets, who had seen the child carried off, are hurrying to a castle on the right to tell the news. The same subject occurs on misericords at Whalley and Worcester. At Elford, Stafford, an eagle gripping a child in swaddling clothes forms the crest of the helmet on which rests the head of Sir John Stanley, *ob.* 1474.

Lincoln 13th c

6. Alexander's Flight.

Many were the stories told of Alexander the Great. One, from the *Gesta Romanorum*, tells of his difficulties with the cockatrice (page 56); but, as often, makes him to be Emperor of Rome. Of the *Romance of Alexander* there are two illuminated copies in the British Museum; one of them was the gift of the great Talbot to Margaret of Anjou: there is also a very fine copy at Oxford in the Bodleian.* The romance was very

* An illustrated paper by Mr Campbell Hodgson on "Alexander's Journey to the Sky" appeared in the *Burlington Magazine* for February 1905.

popular, and there are numerous manuscripts of it and printed editions in many languages. Its source is to be found in a work written in Greek at Alexandria *c.* 200 A.D., called *Pseudo-Callisthenes;* this was translated into Latin by the Archpriest Leo at Naples in the tenth century.

The story, says Mr Campbell Hodgson, forms part of a letter supposed to be written by Alexander to his mother, Olympias, describing his exploits and adventures in the East and the wonderful birds and beasts he had seen. On arriving at the end of the world, Alexander was desirous to see whether it was so, and was the place where the sky slopes down to it.

"So," says Alexander, "I ordered two of the birds of that place to be caught; for they were huge white birds, very strong and tame withal, for

Chester 13.90

when they saw us, they did not take flight; and some of the soldiers mounted on their necks and the birds flew up with them. So when two of them were secured, I gave orders that no food should be given them for three days. And on the third day I ordered a piece of wood to be constructed, in shape like a yoke, and a basket to be fastened in the midst thereof, with two spears seven cubits in length, having horse's liver on the top." The birds were made fast to the wooden frame and Alexander climbed into the basket. "Immediately the birds flew up to devour the liver and I went up with them in the air so far that I thought I was near the sky. And I shivered all over by reason of the exceeding coldness of the air that arose from the birds' wings." He goes on to say that he saw far below a great serpentine ocean encircling the earth, which appeared as a small round threshing-floor in the midst thereof. Then he turned the spear downwards and the birds descended on to a spot which was ten days' march from Alexander's camp.

In most versions of the story the birds are expressly said to

Gloucester

be griffins, and their number varies from two to sixteen. And instead of horse's liver, one illustration shews two small white dogs tied to the ends of two spears, and another a headless carcase fastened to the top of two spears which are lashed together, forming a single upright. In the example from Gloucester cathedral (80) a king is seen seated on a throne; his crown, robe and wavy hair resemble those on the effigy of Edward II. in the same cathedral. He is flanked by two griffins, who have collars round their neck, but no chains. He is making a speech to them—perhaps giving them directions about the journey—and with uplifted forefinger bespeaks their attention.

Gloucester

The griffins have not yet started, their wings being folded. In the second example (80) the king grasps in his right hand and supports on his left what are probably the shafts of the two spears mentioned above; while the horse's liver is apparently represented by two hocks of a deer or ox; the griffins are now chained by their collars to the throne; their wings are expanded and they are in flight. On misericords in Beverley St Mary and Wells cathedral is a king between two griffins rampant with straps round their necks;* on another, in Lincoln Minster, is a king on a throne, sceptre in hand, his throne suspended from the necks of two griffins (78). At Darlington is a crowned king with orb and sceptre between two eagles or griffins.† There is also an example on a misericord in Chester cathedral, where the supporters again are griffins (79).

Exeter

7. The Lay of Aristotle.

What the mediæval world thought of the philosopher Aristotle may be read in the popular *Lay of Aristotle* written in old French towards the end of the twelfth century. Aristotle, it is said, during the campaign in India had rebuked his pupil, Alexander, for giving too much time to a native beauty. The

* Illustrated in *Archæologia*, lv. 340.
† Illustrated in Longstaffe's *Darlington*, 218.

lady determined on revenge. Accordingly next day she went into the orchard beneath Aristotle's window, wearing only a "Coa vestis," singing and gathering flowers. It was too much for Aristotle. He came down into the orchard; and in a few minutes, to please his lady, the philosopher was on all fours, playing at "horses," while she rode, reins in one hand, whip in the other. "Well," said the pupil, who was viewing the scene from the castle wall, amazed,

"Que tout le meilleur clerc du mond
Fit comme roncin enseler,"

"if love can make such a fool of an old man, no wonder that a young man cannot escape." Or, as an old French poem points the moral of the story:

"Amors vainc tout et tout vaincra
Tant com cis siecles durera."

St Pierre, Caen

The *Lay of Aristotle* is represented on the façade of Lyons cathedral twice; and once on the Portail de la Calende of Rouen cathedral, on a stall in Lausanne cathedral, on a capital in St Pierre, Caen (82), on a boss of the vault in the Abbey of Cadouin, Dordogne; over the presbytery windows at Cracow; on misericords at Dordrecht, Montbenoit, Doubs, Rouen cathedral, and Isle d'Adam, Seine-et-Oise; but the finest examples are to be seen on the stalls and capitals of Verteuil, Gironde, where all the episodes of the story are represented.

Mr Druce notes two examples on English misericords. In neither of them is the damsel represented, partly because there was no room for her, partly because everybody knew the reference without her. At Exeter (81) Aristotle has saddle and stirrups and a philosopher's cap; at Chichester (83), the Phrygian cap is represented, to shew the Eastern origin of the story. It is possible that some of the representations of naked women riding various animals may be parodies of this popular story.*

* See Maeterlinck, 224, 267.

Virgil, the epic poet, fares no better than Aristotle, the philosopher. He had a rendezvous with the daughter of the Emperor of Rome, and was to have been drawn up in a basket to her chamber. But his cruel lady drew him up only half-way, and left him dangling in the basket all night, till daylight exposed him to the ridicule of the passers-by.

Chichester

8. VALENTINE AND ORSON.

Another favourite romance was that of Valentine and Orson; the brothers' names still survive on an inn sign in Long Lane, Bermondsey. They are said to have been twins; born in a forest near Orleans. One of them, Orson, was carried off into the forest by a bear. While the mother was searching for him, the other brother, Valentine, disappeared, having been taken off by King Pipin. So one brother was brought up by a bear, the other by a king. Orson became a wild man of the woods, and is represented, sometimes as a wodehouse, sometimes as in woodman's dress. One day Valentine went hunting in the forest for the wild man, who was the terror of the district, and at last came across Orson. A misericord in Beverley St Mary's depicts their mutual recognition; it will be seen that Orson is dressed like a simple woodman, while Valentine wears rich court dress. Orson went back to court with Valentine and became his faithful friend and comrade. One day, in search of adventure, Valentine

set forth to subdue a giant; but after a brave fight was disarmed. Orson, however, came up with his wodehouse club, and smote the giant senseless. This may be the scene represented on misericords at Gloucester, Chester and Ripon. But fights with giants are pretty common; and the identification is not worth much. The pretty story of Red Riding Hood also occurs; notably on a misericord at Chester.

CHAPTER VIII

ÆSOP'S FABLES

FABLES were great favourites in the Middle Ages. In 1157 Neckham edited at Paris a collection entitled *Novus Æsopus*. Scenes from fables are common in the twelfth, and still more in the thirteenth century; occurring on porches, tympana, capitals, &c. The fable of the wolf and stork contrasts rapacity with confiding innocence; it occurs on the west doorways of Autun and Amiens cathedral. The fable of the fox and stork

Gloucester

occurs on the north doorway of Holt church, Worcestershire; and on a misericord in Chester cathedral. That of the fox and the sour grapes occurs on misericords in Chester cathedral and Faversham church. Two misericords in Gloucester cathedral are pointed out by Dr Oscar Clark as representing scenes from Æsop. In one a man and donkey are dancing together; this may refer to the fable of the ass and the young dog.

"The ass was envious of the dog being in such favour with his lord; and said he to himself, 'If my lord love this miscreant beast because that he

cheereth him and maketh pleasure to everybody, by greater reason they ought to love me if I make cheer to them. From henceforth I shall make my disport and shall make joy and play with my lord.' But the result was disastrous, for the lord's servants then took great staves, and began to smite upon the poor ass, and so beat him that thereafter he had no lust nor courage to dance nor to make cheer or sport."

The other misericord seems to illustrate the fable, "*Vestigia nulla retrorsum.*" A lion is approaching a fox stealthily, who looks anything but happy (85).

"Once upon a time the lion feigned himself sick. And when the beasts knew that the lion was sick, they would all go to visit and see him as their king. And incontinent as the beasts entered into his house for to see and comfort him, he devoured and ate them. But the foxes were too wary and would not come in. And the lion asked of them why they would not come within; and one of the foxes said to him: 'We know well by the traces that all the beasts which have entered into thy house came not out again; no more should we, if entered within, come out again.'"

CHAPTER IX

SCENES OF EVERYDAY LIFE

THE misericords hitherto described have all some symbolical or moral intent. But there is a large and interesting class in which there is no ulterior intent other than to portray faithfully the daily life of humble folk. The carver knows nothing and depicts nothing of the exalted existence of the lord and squire in the castle and manor house. His scenes are those of everyday life in the village—the village cottage and the

St David's

village tavern; or what, when he was lucky, he saw now and then in the village street—the showman with bears or monkeys, or the ducking-stool and the scold inside it. At St David's is represented home life as it should be; the husband is seated on a bench, and the wife is setting on the table calf's head for dinner (87). Many interesting interiors are depicted where husband and wife live in harmony; but more often, in very much the reverse. At Bristol and elsewhere is seen the process of cutting up Grunt, the swine (88). At Minster in Thanet,

Maidstone and Windsor the operations of cooking are shewn, and quite a large collection of culinary instruments is represented. At Minster the cook is a person of importance, perhaps the conventual cook; he is stirring the contents of the iron pot vigorously, and has a basting ladle and a shovel for putting bread into the oven; he appears to be shouting out orders to his scullions; chickens are on the menu, and are shewn on the supporters. At Maidstone the cook holds a ladle in his left hand, and in his right a pronged hook for dragging joints out of the boiling water. At Windsor he has left the pot and a big

Bristol

dog is grabbing the meat in it; he is shewn himself in the left supporter with a ladle in his hand; in front of him is a large pestle and mortar, which once was an indispensable accessory in every kitchen—in recent years many a discarded kitchen mortar has been taken to be a font or a holy-water stoup—to the left is a table with two platters on it and a pot beneath. The dog and pot scene recurs in various forms, *e.g.*, on an elbow rest at Christchurch, and in all probability is a representation of a singularly dirty custom. In Beverley Minster a dog is licking out a pot, while the sluttish wife is

thrashing her husband (89). This method of "washing up" seems to have been adopted by housewives both here and abroad. It is still the custom among the peasants in Holland after dinner to give the pot to the dog to lick out; wherefore it is said of a guest who comes too late to dinner *hy vindt den hond in de pot, i.e.*, that the pot was empty and had been given the dog to lick. That this was also the custom in England in dirty houses appears from the signboards of the inns, "Dog and Pot," and "Dog and Crock." In the Roxburghe Ballads it is said of a slut

> "If otherwise she had
> But a dishclout fail,
> She would them to the dog to lick
> And wipe them with his tail."

Beverley Minster

There was formerly an inn in Bishop's Stortford with the sign "The Dog's Head in a Pot."

At Minster is depicted a happy old lady with distaff in hand, busily spinning, with her faithful cat and dog one on each side. At Ludlow the scene shifts to the village tavern; the ale is running into a jug much bigger than the barrel from which it is drawn; on the wall is a jug with a spout, and on the floor a small upright keg (90); in another scene the Ludlow alewife is being dragged off to hell for supplying bad liquor or too little of it (148). The infliction of corporal punishment was also a popular subject. In those days everybody thrashed everybody. The schoolmaster set the example. "A great man," said Sir Roger de Coverley, when he came to the monument

Ludlow

of Dr Busby in Westminster Abbey; "thrashed my grandfather." Husband thrashed wife, and not infrequently wife thrashed husband; fathers thrashed sons and daughters too. At Sherborne are four unfortunates at school with their lesson books; one of whom is being flagellated with a very big birch (90); other schoolmasters are seen at work at Boston and Norwich. The main object of education was to get the nonsense thrashed out of a boy; and corporal punishment was depicted on many school seals as the most important function of a headmaster; *e.g.*, on the seals of the grammar schools of Louth and Uppingham.

Sherborne

CHAPTER X

AGRICULTURE AND TRADES

WHEN these misericords were carved, England was mainly a rural country; villagers outnumbered townsfolk. The towns were small, and the countryside was close at hand; at every street end was a glimpse of green fields; even from the capital, London, to Westminster was open country; to reach the latter one passed by the church of St Martin *in the Fields* and the village of Charing. The air was full of country sights and country sounds, and poetry was redolent of sweet country air. Everybody had heard the milkmaid singing:

"The blackbird and thrush
In every bush
And the charming nightingale
Their throats do strain
To entertain
The jovial train
That carry the milking pail."

So the milkmaid is seen milking her cow on a misericord in Beverley Minster (189); on the frieze at the back of the watching loft at St Alban's; and on the east face of the tower at Milverton. Most of all, folk loved the happy summer days when a bumping harvest crowned the long year's work. The hay harvest offered few opportunities for pictorial treatment; but mowers with scythes are shewn on misericords at Malvern, Ripple and Worcester (92). At Brampton is a mower with a broad-bladed scythe, while his wife gathers up the hay with a large rake. On the other hand every detail of the cornfield is rendered with loving fidelity. At Lincoln ploughing, harrowing and sowing are all shewn on one misericord; to the plough is yoked a team of oxen, with horses for leaders. At Worcester the sower carries the seed in an open box slung over his shoulder; he has emptied the box and is refilling it with a bowl from two sacks on the ground; the birds are flying down to get their share (92); at Ripple the sower is casting the seed

Worcester

Worcester

Ripple

broadcast into well-marked furrows (118). The corn, when ripe, is cut with a sickle as at Brampton; the sickle, as in Roman practice, sometimes had saw-teeth; "Falcibus denticulatis medium culmen secant;" (Columella, *De De Rustica*). At Worcester three harvesters are making bands of the corn with which to bind the sheaves; each supporter consists of three sheaves (93). In a misericord in the Architectural Association Museum a man is putting a band round a sheaf, and his wife is carrying the sheaves off to a stook (68): in another misericord in the same museum one harvester is pitching a sheaf up into the cart, while the other is loading the cart; the horse is looking round to see that they do not give him too big a load to draw (68). The third of this set shews the same two men

Worcester

threshing the corn with flails (68); at Brampton a widow woman is gleaning. In Beverley Minster is a graphic picture of sheep-shearing. The sheep are small horned sheep, such as may be still seen on the fells; the three on the left have been shorn; a fourth, on the extreme right, is still unshorn; the shepherd bestrides a fifth, just as shearers still do; on his right is a pot of tar with which to stop bleeding from any cut his shears may make; in front is what seems to be his wife, perhaps rolling up a fleece, or putting salve on a diseased hoof (94). In the left supporter the shepherd is shewn, crook in hand, patting his dog; on the right two sheep are butting one another. At Ely a man is shoeing a horse (unless it be a plough ox); a second man holds him by the tail, and a third by the mane (94). In

Beverley Minster

those days there was no barley meal for the pigs; they had to get their living as best they could in the woods; in the autumn the swineherd fattened them for killing by providing a generous diet of acorns. At Worcester he is knocking down acorns from an oak for two pigs (95). The pigs are little like their sleek, smooth skinned descendants; they are usually represented with a ridge of bristles more like that of a wild boar, *e.g.*, at Bristol (88). There is nothing that country folk like to see better than slaughtering; and so at Malvern and Worcester (95) a butcher is seen with a pole axe felling a placid ox oblivious of his doom. Drawings of stalls formerly in the church of St Spire at Corbeil,

Ely

Worcester

Worcester

Wellingborough

near Paris, depict the wine merchant, the baker, the shoemaker and the carpenter.* Boat building is well represented on a misericord at St David's. At Brampton a length of cloth is strapped down on a table, and a weaver is cutting the pile with a pair of shears as big as himself.† Sometimes the very man who carved the misericord is seen at work; *e.g.*, at Beverley Minster, Brampton, Christchurch, Great Doddington, Wellingborough, and formerly at Lynn St Nicholas, where he was at work on a screen. At Great Doddington and Wellingborough he has a board on his knees, on which he is carving a rose in relief: beside him are a hammer, compasses, chisels and gouges (95): in the former he has a compass and mallet. On the misericord

Lynn St Nicholas

formerly at Lynn St Nicholas is a carver with two apprentices at work on a bench behind, and another apprentice beside him: on the supporters are shewn a saw and a gouge (96). On a misericord at Christchurch, Hampshire, a man grasps a mallet in his right hand, and a chisel in his left. At Wellingborough a shoemaker is represented. At Ludlow the sexton is immortalised; his two shovels are shewn above a tomb, with a skull and crossbones; also a holy water bucket and aspersor; it was one of a sexton's most valued perquisites to carry holy water round the parish and asperse the faithful for a small fee.

* Illustrated in Wright's *Caricature*, 134, 138, 142.

† The Brampton misericords are now at Cambridge, in the Archæological Museum.

CHAPTER XI

SPORTS AND PASTIMES

A VERY interesting set of carvings depicts the sports and amusements of Old England. England was still largely covered with forest; and in the forest there roamed the wild boar as well as the stag and fox; while in the open there were hares and rabbits and partridges galore. For pastime there was football on the village green, or the quintain; in every town there was a bull-ring; in the village street and the churchyard there were to be

Worcester

seen wrestling, quoits, putting the weight, dancing bears, monkeys at their tricks, acrobats, contortionists, and grinning clowns; dancing to the notes of violin and guitar, or of the more plebeian pipe and drum; for indoor games there were dice, backgammon, blind man's buff and the hobby horse. Sport was just as dear to the Englishmen then as now, and there was much more of it. At Worcester the huntsman quite literally "winds his horn"; for it is wound round his body (97). At Ely the huntsman is on

horseback, and has had a tremendous fall; on the left supporter are two hinds chased by two dogs (98). In Beverley Minster the huntsman is on foot, and with his spear has transfixed the chest of a fine stag, whom two hounds are pulling down from behind: round their necks are spiked collars for protection against wolves. In another scene two huntsmen are dismembering the stag, which lies on its back with its throat cut. On the left a man holds a dog in a leash; on the right he blows a horn, while four dogs jump up round him barking (99). Fox hunting is shewn at Gloucester, Ripon and Beverley Minster; Reynard, as usual, is too much for the hounds; at Gloucester he has climbed into a tree, while the dogs are baying below; on the left a huntsman kneeling on his left knee, is drawing an arrow to

Ely

shoot him (99). At Beverley, on the right, Reynard is going to earth, and the huntsman, running up, draws a bow to shoot him (99). The wild boar provided nobler sport. In Beverley Minster the hunter is driving his spear into a boar with bristling ridge and big tusks, while his dog, in quite orthodox fashion, has seized another boar by the ear (100). At Ely the harriers are at work in an oak wood; one hare has already been killed and is slung on a stick over the huntsman's back; two hounds are chasing another hare in the right supporter; in the left supporter another huntsman, with a hound in leash, is blowing a horn (100); hare hunting is shewn also on a misericord at Chichester. Hawking was not for common folk; a hawk on the wrist was the mark of a gentleman. In Beverley Minster, under the stall

Beverley Minster

Gloucester

Beverley Minster

Beverley Minster

Ely

Beverley Minster

of John Sparke, is a huntsman with a headless hawk on his wrist; on another misericord the centrepiece is a hawk; on the left the falconer is feeding his hawk; on the right it is preying on a partridge (100). At Worcester the centrepiece is a sphinx; the hawk has flown from the falconer on the left, whose glove is well shewn, and on the right has seized a mallard (101). Other examples occur at Ludlow, Chester, St Katherine's, Winchester College and Wellingborough. The quintain is shewn on a misericord at Bristol;* and the game of quoits on one at Chester. Two football "forwards" are shewn at high speed at Gloucester (102); and as one of them is on the point of handling the ball, it must be the Rugby and not the Association game! At Ely two wrestlers are getting a grip; at Halsall, Lancashire, is a still more graphic representation (102).

Worcester 1347

The bear-warden and his tame bears were great favourites in Old England and are frequently represented. In a poem which is not later than the twelfth century there is a description of an exhibition of the accomplishments of tame bears which followed the dinner of a Teutonic chief:†

"Et pariles ursi
Qui vas tollebant ut homo, bipedesque gerebant.
Mimi quando fides digitis tangunt modulantes,
Illi saltabant, numeros pedibus variabant.
Interdum saliunt seseque super jaciebant.
Alterutrum dorso se portabant residendo,
Amplexando se, luctando deficiunt se."

* Possibly the illustration on page 160 may refer to the quintain.
† Wright's *Caricature*, 43.

Gloucester

Halsall

Beverley Minster

At Beverley Minister there are four misericords in which the bear appears. In one a man on horseback leads by a chain three muzzled bears. In a second two men are dragging a muzzled bear by a rope towards a wheelbarrow which a third man is pushing up; on the right supporter a muzzled bear is licking his paws (102). In a third they have got the bear on to a sort of wicker sledge, which two of them are dragging by a rope, while a third holds the staff of a flag; on the left supporter the bearward is muzzling a bear; on the right a bear and a man are wrestling or dancing together (104). At Gloucester a big dog, wearing a collar, is worrying a bear with collar and chain; there seem to be two bear leaders, for there are two hats on the ground, but only one man is shewn (104). In a fourth misericord in Beverley Minster four dogs are baiting a bear; the bear has got one dog down, and the dog in front has been mauled and is howling; a third has seized the bear by the neck; two hunters are urging on the dogs, one of them blowing a horn. If it is a spear-head that projects from the bear's back, the scene will represent a bear hunt, and not the baiting of a tame bear (104). The bear is a favourite also on the misericords of Boston church; where he is represented as an accomplished musician, playing in turn the bagpipes, organ and drum.

A still greater favourite was the monkey—usually represented as a dog-faced baboon. His baboon character comes out strongly on a misericord in Beverley St Mary's (181) and on the elbow of a stall at Stowmarket. The baboon has had a long history in art. A favourite subject in Roman art represented Æneas carrying his father Anchises, and dragging along by the hand his little boy Ascanius, from the flames of Troy. This is burlesqued in a wall-painting in Pompeii by giving all three the heads of baboons; Æneas is a strong young monkey, looking back on burning Troy, and carrying an old monkey who holds the box containing the treasures of empire; the boy holds a sort of hockey stick.* The monkey was known to the Anglo-Saxons, who called it *apa*, our word *ape*. In the Bestiaries it is described as a consummate mimic; moreover among its young it always has some which it likes and favours more than the rest. This fondness for its offspring may be the reason why on misericords in Beverley Minster and Manchester it is represented dandling a swaddled baby; unless the reference be to some forgotten story of a monkey running away with a baby from its cradle (75). The monkey is often represented in derision of music and dancing; in Beverley

* Illustrated in Wright's *Caricature*, 22 and 95.

Beverley Minster

Gloucester

Beverley Minster

Minster he plays the bagpipes while a bear dances (104). He is the chief friend of Reynard the fox; on one misericord, after the hanging of Reynard, the monkey is unloosing the noose; in another he is tucking him up in bed (99). One of the chief accomplishments of a trained monkey was riding. In the bailey of the castle, the churchyard and the village green every one had seen monkeys astride all sorts of animals. They were taken to tournaments so that they might see what to do. Alexander Neckham, writing late in the twelfth century, says that one of the showmen taught his two dogs to carry two apes, who sat on their backs provided with military weapons; nor did they lack spurs, with which they vehemently urged on their steeds. Having broken their lances, they drew their swords, with which they spent many blows on each other's shields. Such a tournament, except that the steeds as well as the riders are monkeys, is represented in Queen Mary's Psalter. In a book of prayers, late in the thirteenth century, in the Harleian collection, is an illustration of a monkey riding on a bear. The *Jackanapes on Horseback* was not uncommon as an inn sign. Holinshed says that in 1562 "for the diversion of the populace there was an horse with an ape on his back, which highly pleased them, so that they expressed their inward conceived joy and delight with shrill shouts and variety of gesture." This was a common interlude in bear or bull baiting. In 1572 the parsons were accused of galloping through morning service, because "there are some games to be played in the afternoon, *e.g.*, a bear or a bull to be baited, or else a jackanapes to ride on horseback." So late as 1856 the Parisians were entertained every Sunday afternoon in the Hippodrome by apes on horseback in Arab dress.* On a misericord in Beverley Minster an ape is on horseback; on another he is mounted on a dog (99).

It is hardly likely that there were travelling menageries in the fourteenth and fifteenth century; but it was common enough for noblemen to keep wild animals and to let them out occasionally as a spectacle or to set them to fight one another. Thus Henry I. had a menagerie at Woodstock, which remained there till it was transferred to the Tower of London by Henry III.; it remained in the Tower, where it was one of the chief attractions, for several centuries, in fact till the establishment of the present Zoological Gardens in Regent's Park. In the thirteenth century the French architect, Villard de Honnecourt, was invited to visit the menagerie of a great lord, and made sketches, still in existence, of two parrots and a lion; "cil lion," he says

* Larwood and Hotten, 439.

proudly, "fut contrefais al vif." Some of the carvers also must have seen real lions and camels and elephants; others certainly had not, or they would not have produced such elephants as those at Gloucester and Beverley Minster. Camels occur at Boston, Manchester, Ripon, Lincoln, and All Saints', Hereford. At Manchester a camel fights a unicorn, and at Lincoln and Ripon a lion; which does not argue any very intimate knowledge of the habits of the animals.

In many cases no doubt animal subjects are no more than observations, sometimes surprisingly minute and telling, of natural history. Nothing can be prettier than the carvings of the cat and mice * (106), the hen and chickens (157), the cocks on a tun, and the cow licking itself (189), on misericords in Bever-

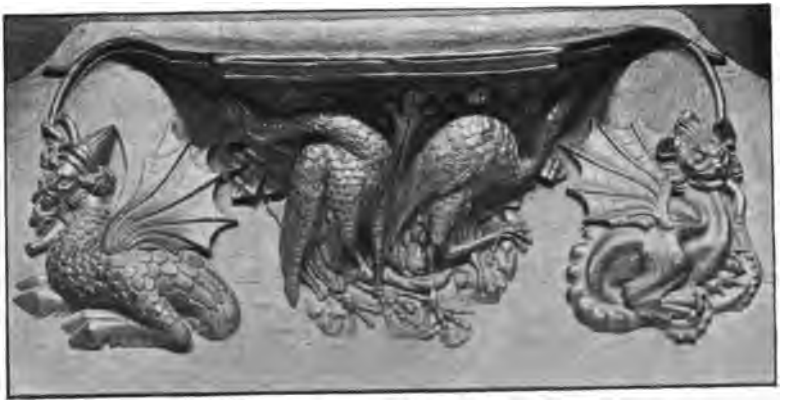
Beverley Minster

ley Minster; that of a bat, and another of a bat's head, at Wells are absolutely photographic (107). The sow and pigs at Ripon; and the fighting rams at Ely and Beverley (94) also deserve notice. Quite realistic is the sheep-shearing scene in the last. At Christchurch, on a Renaissance misericord, is a dog gnawing a bone; every rib and vertebra of the starved creature is shewn. This subject occurs also on a misericord in Beverley Minster and on a piscina in the undercroft of the Chapter House at Wells. It also appears on a Flemish brass, dated 1429, of Richard Thornton in All Saints' church, Newcastle-on-Tyne, where the feet of the recumbent figure rest on a dog gnawing a bone; it

* The cat and mice, the cock crowing, the bat, the sow and pigs, and the hen and chickens are all Bestiary subjects.—G. C. D.

Wells 1330

Christchurch



Chester

must have some esoteric meaning (107). Very vigorous indeed is the masterly carving of the fox and goose at Carlisle (37). Equally realistic are the imaginary beasties at All Saints', Hereford (66). The finest misericord of all is perhaps that of the two herons at Chester (107), near which may be placed that of the two pelicans in the same cathedral (146). The sporting subject of the hawk or falcon pouncing on a mallard or a rabbit is very frequent, and is usually rendered in a spirited manner (108).

Among the villagers and burghers the stately dances of the nobility had no vogue; they preferred to see dancing bears and monkeys, ladies who could stand on their heads and turn a somersault, and the like. At Chichester a minstrel is seen kissing a posturer (109). When the daughter of Herodias is represented

Wells

at Ely before Herod, she is not dancing, but turning a somersault (144); other tumblers are seen at Chichester, Christchurch, Hemington, Winchester, Magdalen and All Saints', Oxford. And there was great applause for the man who could twist his limbs into impossible positions; contortionists occur very frequently on the misericords. Contorted figures are often employed to support the ledge; *e.g.*, at Ely (198) and All Saints', Hereford (109). Sometimes the posture-makers worked in pairs. One trick was for a couple of them to arrange themselves ball-shape, and then roll over and over (109); in France this goes by the name of *pet-en-gueule.** On another misericord, also at Ely, two men on a seat appear to be supporting a horse's hind legs;

* See Witkowski's *L'art profane*, 354.

Chichester

Hereford

Ely

each of the supposititious legs, however, is really composed of an arm and a leg of one of the posture-makers (110). Another sport was to see who could make the most comical or the most horrible grimace; prizes are still offered here and there in out-of-the-way places at the village feast for the clown who wins most applause by grinning through a horse collar. Most vigorous examples occur at Beverley Minster, in fool's caps (111) at Sherborne (111), Chichester, Stratford-on-Avon, and elsewhere. The professional fool, with eared cap, scalloped tunic, bells and bladder, naturally occurs very frequently; there is a fine example in Beverley Minster (112); where indeed he had every right to be; for every Christmas there was held in the Minster the Feast of Fools, when the clergy and others, dressed up as fools, held mock services and

Ely

parodied the ritual. It was a very ancient custom, pagan no doubt in origin, taken over by the Christian Church in its early days. It was customary, *de consuetudine*, in Sens cathedral in 1222. In 1391 the Archbishop of York at last issued injunction to the Provost of Beverley Minster "that he abolish the corrupt and ancient custom of the King of Fools, both within the church and without." It was formally abolished throughout England by royal proclamation in 1542; it lingered on in France till 1668.* All these people—the bear leader, the tumbler, the acrobat, the contortionist, the clown and the professional fool, were in those days welcome in the highest circles. They were hired to dispel the stupidity of a dinner party just as a West End

* Wildridge, 27.

Beverley Minster

Beverley Minster

Sherborne

hostess nowadays engages an opera singer. They were allowed to brighten the monotonous life of the mediæval monk; they were even admitted into nunneries. Their expert knowledge

Beverley Minster

was called on to make a success of the religious dramas, the mysteries and the miracle plays; they were indispensable to that large section of the British people which has not wit enough

Sherborne

to amuse itself. Their efforts to keep their dull hearers on the smile were arduous, and the large measure of success with which they were crowned gave them an important social status;

they supplied a want. The wood-carvers, therefore, who recorded real life, rightly gave them an important position among the subjects of the misericords.

A few children's games are also depicted. At Sherborne the hobby horse is shewn (112); at Westminster a boy bestrides one. At St Andrew Hubbard, London, in 1499 there was "paid 2d. to Mayer's child for dancing with the hobby horse." Blind Man's Buff is said to be carved on a misericord at Bristol; backgammon or tric trac on others at Manchester and Windsor. On a misericord at Westminster two boys have their hands and feet tied to a stick passed beneath their knees, and are playing at cock-fighting.

CHAPTER XII

THE MONTHS AND SEASONS

REPRESENTATIONS of the months, seasons, and signs of the Zodiac were very frequent, both in classical and in mediæval art. A full account of these is given by Mr James Fowler in *Archæologia*, xliv. 137. His examples, however, are largely drawn from foreign sources, especially from cathedral sculpture, tiles and glass in Italy and France, and are only applicable in a general way to English mediæval wood carving; moreover he did not include the important series from Carlisle. The Months and Seasons in architecture are intimately connected with the mediæval Psalters, which were generally preceded by a calendar. Each month occupies a page, the sign of the Zodiac being placed at the top and the appropriate occupation for the month at the foot. Two manuscript calendars of the eleventh century, both in the British Museum, *Tiberius* B. v. and *Julius* A. vi., may be taken as typical examples and will be referred to below. The occupations ascribed to each month are by no means uniform in manuscripts and sculpture; comparisons are interesting as indicating variations of climate and habit. Good examples of Zodiacs or Months may be seen at the following places. (1) *Brookland.* At Brookland, Kent, is a lead font, of late twelfth century date, with both zodiacs and months. (2) *Burnham.* At Burnham Deepdale, Norfolk, is a stone font with the months. Both these fonts are illustrated and described in the writer's *Fonts and Font Covers*, pp. 189 and 190. (3) *York.* The twelfth century doorway of St Margaret's, York, has the months. (4) *Easby.* Some of the months were represented in wall paintings in Easby church, Yorkshire. (5) *Leicester.* Others are seen in late painted glass in the Mayor's Parlour in the old Town Hall at Leicester. (6) *St Alban's.* Another series, mutilated in parts, is seen at the back of the watching loft at St Alban's, which was probably erected in the reign of Richard II. (7) *Carlisle.* A complete set of the months (much restored) occurs on the fourteenth century

capitals of the pier arcade of the quire of Carlisle.* Good examples of the months also appear on the west doorways of the cathedrals of Senlis, Reims, Amiens, Paris; on the north doorway of Semur and Chartres, and in the glass of the quire of the latter, and in the western rose of Notre Dame, Paris. The following verses were a favourite *memoria technica* of the representations of the months:

1 Poto 2 ligna cremo 3 de vite superflua demo,
4 Do gramen gratum 5 mihi flos servit, mihi pratum,
6 Fœnum declino 7 messes meto 8 vina propino,
9 Semen humi jacto, 10 mihi pasco suem, 11 immolo porcos.

It was noted also by scholars that the months corresponded with the number of the Apostles.

A very large number of the carvings on misericords, which have been described above as representations of agriculture, trades and occupations, sport, domestic life, &c., are in addition representations of the months or the seasons. It is difficult, however, in many cases to identify them with certainty. In the first place, there appears to be no complete set of representations of the months surviving on misericords. Secondly, in the numerous "restorations" of the churches the original order of the misericords has usually been completely upset: the nine sets mentioned above, which are not misericords, retain their original order, and in many cases are inscribed with the name of the month represented. Thirdly, the calendar has been changed: *e.g.*, our month of May corresponds to the last half of May and the first half of June in the mediæval calendar. Fourthly, many of these representations, *e.g.*, of Janus and of the vintage, undoubtedly go back to classical times and apply to southern climes where the seasons are much earlier than with us, *e.g.*, Pig killing, which in England symbolised November or December, stands for September on the façade of Parma cathedral.

The ancient representations of the months and seasons filtered through in more than one way. They occur over and over again in literature; the Pseudo-Ansonius has a long poem devoted to nothing else; we have already alluded to their occurrence in illuminated manuscripts; finally, they were familiarised to the common folk by rude illustrations in mediæval almanacks and the like. Ultimately the pictorial representations of the months became to a considerable extent standardised.

* See Mr Fowler's monograph.

JANUARY.—The pagan representation of Janus is frequent: he has two heads; the idea is that with one head he looks back on the Old Year, with the other forward to the New; this is seen at Worle (117). Sometimes he is rather ingeniously supplied with three heads; for if he has one head for the past and a second for the future, he needs a third for the present. Chaucer says of January in the *Franklin's Tale:*

> "Janus sits by the fire with double beard,
> And drinketh out his bugle horn the wine;
> Before him stands the brawn of tuskèd swine,
> And 'Nowell' crieth every lusty man."

At Carlisle is a figure in a loose-fitting tunic, sitting down; he has three faces—two in profile—and is drinking with the right and left mouths. At Brookland there is a two-faced Janus seated at the table with Saxon drinking horn and goblet, drinking the Old Year out and the New Year in. At Malvern a man is sitting at table; and though he has but one mouth, he is holding two goblets (117). At Burnham and St Alban's there is a man carousing. At Ripple a man is shewn emptying two jugs; this seems to be an English version of Aquarius (117). The two manuscripts have representations of ploughing and sowing; and it may be that the representation on a Worcester misericord of a woman with a distaff and a man digging with a spade may mean January. Ploughing is shewn on a Lincoln misericord; on another is a man carrying wood for the fire.

FEBRUARY.—This month was a very cold one, as it included the first half of the present March; and by far the commonest representation of it is to depict a man who has the good sense to stay indoors. At Ripple husband and wife sit over the fire; the husband has a cold in the head, and his head and neck are muffled up; on his hands are thick woollen gloves with thumb but no fingers; the wife is spinning, and on her chair back sits the cat, washing its paws (118). At Worcester is another man with a cold in his head, and gloves; he has taken his boots off to warm his toes the better. On the right a couple of flitches of bacon hang on the wall, as in many a farmhouse in Yorkshire at present; on the left his dog is enjoying the warmth of the fire (118); in the same scene in Notre Dame, Paris, a ham and a string of sausages hang on the wall. At Carlisle is another man, also suffering from the cold; it is "February Fill-dyke": he is holding one of his boots upside down to let the water drain out of it, the other is toasting at the fire. Both

January—Worle

January—Malvern

January—Ripple

February—Ripple

February—Worcester

March—Ripple

at Worcester and Carlisle the fireplace is carefully carved. The same scene occurs on the two fonts, and at York and St Alban's; and is re-used by Thorswalden in his beautiful medallion of Winter. The two manuscripts, however, have representations of pruning; these perhaps may be drawn from Italian viticulture.

MARCH.—The latter half of our March and the first half of our April is a busy time for the English farmer; he has to plough, harrow, and get his seed in; and it is also the lambing season, which nowadays in England, except in warm and sheltered places, where it is earlier, occupies parts of March, April and May. Digging, sowing and harrowing are shewn in the two manuscripts; digging is seen at Carlisle and Burnham. This is the time for sowing the spring corn; which is shewn at Easby, Worcester, Malvern and Ripple. Spenser associates March both with digging and sowing:

> "in his hand a spade he also hent,
> And in a bag all sorts of seeds ysame,
> Which on the earth he strowed as he went."

At Worcester the sower has a box of corn slung over his shoulder which he is filling with a bowl from one or two sacks on the ground; the supporters are birds trooping down to get their share (92); at Easby a crow is picking up the corn. At Ripple the corn is in a basket of the type now in use in gardens; with his right hand the sower is sowing broadcast (118). The lambing season is represented at St Alban's, and pruning at Brookland and York. Pruning is of the very greatest importance in wine districts, such as those of Italy; and Virgil and other writers on Roman agriculture lay great stress on it. In England, however, it is a very insignificant part of the farmer's work; and it may be suspected that its use as a symbol of March comes from a classical source. March is a windy month, and its wintry blasts may be symbolised by the blasts of the horn; a similar metaphor is employed by Shakespeare in *Henry IV.*, Part I.:

> "The southern wind
> Doth play the trumpet to his purposes,
> And by his hollow whistling in the leaves
> Foretells a tempest and a blustering day."

This may be the symbolism of the Gloucester misericord where the huntsman sounds his horn and his cloak streams out in the

strong wind (121). March is represented in a Runic calendar by a full-faced sun; this occurs at Ripple (121). The sign of the month is *Aries;* this may explain the right supporter of a misericord in Beverley Minster in which the horns of two rams make the astronomical sign of Aries.*

APRIL.—In this month also pruning is represented at Burnham, Easby and Carlisle; and the lambing season again at St Alban's. But at Brookland a woman, and at York a man are shewn holding up branches or flowers; at Worcester and Malvern is a man holding in each hand a bunch of flowers; at Ripple a woman holds a bouquet in each hand, and is flanked by two more large bouquets (121). This refers to what seems to have been one of the happiest days in the year in Old England, when the whole parish went forth in procession with banners and posies of flowers. This was at Rogation Tide, and as that often fell in May, the same symbolism occurs for May as for April. The *Gangdays*, as they were called, are represented in May at Carlisle by a woman holding in each hand a bunch of foliage. In the two manuscripts feasting is represented, which may be another reference to the rejoicings at Rogation Tide. It is quite possible that this festival of the spring tide goes back to pagan days, and is a survival of the Roman *Floralia.* In England the festival was held both in town and country parishes. In the latter the relics of the saints were taken out of the church and carried in solemn procession round the fields. This was usual even in Bede's time. He says, "Tertia feria autem Ascensionem Domini . . . ambulavimus cum reliquiis sanctorum, ut consuetudo illius diei poscebat."

MAY.—In this month there are representations of the Gangdays at Burnham and Carlisle, of the lambing season in the two manuscripts, of digging at Easby, of milking at St Alban's (the cows now being in full milk) and in a supporter at Beverley (189), of a man with an ox at York, and at Brookland of a man on horseback with a hawk on his left wrist.

JUNE.—In June also at Carlisle a horseman is shewn, carrying a hawk in his right hand, and holding in his left a spray of roses, the typical flower of the month; at Easby there is a man on horseback. One manuscript shews felling timber the other reaping corn; both representations must come from a southern clime. In England this is the great season for haymaking; men with scythes are shewn at Brookland, York, and St Alban's. At Malvern is a man holding a scythe in front of him. At Brampton a man has a broad-bladed scythe; his

* Wildridge, 21.

March—Gloucester

March—Ripple

April—Ripple

wife a toothed rake. There is a French saying, bidding to put the scythe into the meadow on the 11th of June:

"A la saint Barnabé
La faux au prè."

In this month also begins the weeding of the growing corn; this was done with a pair of tools; with a crutch in the left hand the weeds were held down, while their tops were cut off with a hook held in the right; this is shewn on a misericord at Malvern, a very slovenly process; nowadays we should hoe them up, roots and all. This was the month for sheepshearing also; old Tusser writes:

"In June wash thy sheep when the water doth run;
Then shear them and spare not."

Sheepshearing is represented in Beverley Minster (94).

JULY.—The hay harvest does not finish in June, at any rate in northern counties, and so it is shewn at Carlisle as an emblem of July. The second manuscript depicts grass being mown; so also at Burnham; at Brookland a man is gathering together the hay with a rake. Weeding also continues; it occurs at York, St Alban's, and Carlisle, but in the last not till August. Felling trees is shewn in the first manuscript, but that must refer to an Italian climate.

AUGUST.—There is no ambiguity as to the emblem of this month; it is the month of the corn-harvest and that alone; and a much more important month than it is now, when the corn is cut and tied into sheaves by machinery; all that is left to the farm hands now is to pile the corn in "stooks" or "shocks," and when it has remained long enough in stook for the corn to fill up and harden, to carry it away and stack it. But before machinery came in, when the corn was reaped with a sickle, harvest lasted from first to last some six weeks, even if there were no breaks of bad weather. So there is a crowd of representations of the corn harvest. Reaping is depicted in the second manuscript; at Brookland; at York; and at St Alban's. At Brampton a man is reaping and laying the corn he has cut in a sheaf ready to be tied up; at his back is his wife, who is resting from her work for a moment with her sickle on her back. At Ripple also man and wife work together; they have a tool in each hand and have been supposed to be weeding; but what they are cutting is plainly not weeds but corn; with a crutch or hook they push the corn stalks towards the sickle (92). The next thing is to take a handful of corn stalks and make them into a band; this is seen at Worcester, where the three

harvesters have wrongly been thought to be weeding (93). At Burnham also a man is seen binding a sheaf. At Lynn the man is binding a sheaf, and the wife is carrying the sheaves to a stook (68); at Brampton the stook is shewn in dreadful perspective. Then, again at Lynn, up comes the horse and cart; a man is pitching up the sheaves with a fork to another who is loading the cart with them (68). At Ripple there was not room for the horse and cart in the harvest field (118); so it has been inserted in another misericord, that of the sower; one symbolising the beginning, the other the end of the year's work. When the fields are clear, the women go a gleaning, as at Brampton. Nowadays the horse-rakes leave so little on the ground that it is hardly worth while to go a gleaning; but in the old days every cottager's family expected to get enough corn by gleaning to last them right through the winter.

SEPTEMBER.—When the corn was once housed in stack or barn, there remained the long task of threshing it. Before the advent of the steam threshing-machine, this occupation was a godsend to country labourers, keeping them in employment nearly all the winter in bad weather when they could not get on to the land and when there was little to do on it. Threshing of course was done with the flail. On both fonts and at Leicester a man is threshing with a flail; at Lynn two men (68) have flails. On the seal of the Mayor of Grimsby a boar hunt is represented; the woods in the neighbouring hamlet of Bradley were preserved for the hunting of the boar, and September 8 was the opening day. At Beverley St Mary a huntsman in top boots has driven a spear into the boar; with his left he is about to draw his "misericord" to cut the beast's throat. In Beverley Minster the huntsman is sticking a spear into one boar, while a dog seizes another by the ear (100). The first manuscript also depicts the hunting of the boar; and at St Alban's is shewn an oak with a squirrel in it and a huntsman below. In the second manuscript swine are being driven to the woods; and at York grapes are being gathered; if English, they must have been unripe; but both representations probably derive from an Italian source; treading grapes occurs over a doorway of Modena cathedral and under the vestibule of Lucca cathedral.

OCTOBER.—When the oak woods were full of acorns—and in those days the greater part of England was woodland—the swine were driven into the woods every day to feed on the acorns or mast. Every morning, as may be seen still in many a German village, the swineherd went round very early blowing his horn, and the pigs tumbled over one another to get out of the sties. At the top of the great northern pinnacle of the

façade of Lincoln minster is a statue of the swineherd of Stowe blowing his horn. In addition to windfalls, the swine had what acorns the swineherd could knock down from the oaks; he is seen at work at Lincoln, Malvern, York, Ripple, and Worcester (95). The acorn season lasted about six weeks from the end of September; so the acorn and pig scene is used as an emblem of November at Brookland, where the swineherd holds aloft a hooked stick for dragging down the acorns, and the pigs are feeding below. In a capital of the Chapter House in York Minster is carved an oak tree with acorns; squirrels feed in the branches and pigs below.*

October is also the vintage month. At Brookland a man stands in a hooped vat and holds up a bunch of grapes so that

October—Gloucester

you may see what he is doing; at St Alban's also there is a vintage scene; at Gloucester two men are gathering grapes in a basket (124); at Carlisle a man is cutting grapes; at Ely is a man peering out of vine foliage and grapes. At Burnham a man is shewn barrelling wine. It is possible that all these representations of the vintage are but survivals from Italian sources; on the other hand vineyards were certainly common in England in the Middle Ages. They are mentioned thirty-eight times in Domesday Book, and were attached to most of the larger monasteries. The accounts of the keeper of the vineyard at Windsor Castle in the reign of Edward III. detail every operation of viticulture, from planting, grafting and manuring,

* Browne's *York Minster*, Plate 86.

till casks were made or repaired, the grapes pressed, and the wine barrelled. Hawking is the emblem of October in the two manuscripts. At Worcester there is a king with a glove on his left wrist; his right hand (broken) carried a hawk; the two claws grasping the wrist may still be seen; a page (headless) holds his charger. At Ripple is a mounted man with a hawk (broken) on his left wrist; behind is a spaniel (125). At Beverley Minster is a gentleman with a hawk (headless) on his wrist; and a servant with three spaniels, one of them in leash. Representations of a hawk or falcon striking a mallard or a rabbit are very common; *e.g.*, in Beverley Minster (100). Hare hunting also was an autumn sport; *e.g.*, Ely (100).

NOVEMBER.—The great event of this month was the slaughter

October—Ripple

of the family pig. He had had six weeks feasting on acorns, and was now fat. Therefore frequently a sow and her litter, all ready for killing, are represented; *e.g.*, at St Alban's and Worcester. "Venit hyems," says Virgil, "Glande sues laeti redeunt." It was important to kill them while they were prime and fat, says Tusser.

> "When hog is fat,
> Lose none of that;
> When mast is gone,
> Hog falls anon."

Spenser in the *Faery Queen* (Canto vii.) personifies November:

> "Next was November; he full gross and fat
> As fed with lard, and that right well might seem,
> For he had been a fatting hogs of late."

In early days the pig was decapitated; a great mistake, as the blood was lost for black puddings. More often his throat was cut, as nowadays; he was first hauled up on to a cratch, that a jug might be placed beneath to catch the blood. At Bristol he is being hauled up, alive, on to a cratch; one man holds his front legs; his snout is fastened to the cratch; a second man twists his tail to induce him to mount the cratch (88). At Ripple one man is hauling him by a rope on to a cratch on the right; the second twists his tail; the pig squeals; so does a sympathetic comrade (126). Great was the bloodshed in November; hence Bede calls it *Blod-*

November—Ripple

monath; and in old German it is styled *Slaghtmonat, i.e.*, slaughter-month.

DECEMBER.—When there was no more grass for the live stock, all had to be killed except the plough ox, and as many cows and sheep as could be kept alive on the scanty stock of hay. All this beef and mutton was salted down or pickled and barrelled; no more fresh meat till spring; hence the prevalence of scurvy, as people had to live on salt and pickled meat all the long winter months. At Worcester, Malvern, and Ciudad Rodrigo, Spain, is a butcher about to fell an ox (95); at Carlisle one man is about to fell an ox, the other holds him by the horns. The weather might be expected to turn cold from the middle of our

December to the middle of our January; so in his *December's Abstract* Tusser says that it is

> "No season to hedge;
> Get beetle and wedge;
> Cleave logs now all
> For kitchen and hall."

In several examples men are shewn splitting logs; *e.g.*, at Beverley (89) and perhaps at Ripple. At Leicester a man is warming himself at a fire made no doubt with the split logs. In December at Brookland there is more slaughter; a man is shewn behind a pig with uplifted axe, ready to slay. This doubtless helps to provide the Christmas dinner at which men are seen carousing at Burnham and York.

CHAPTER XIII

OLD TESTAMENT SUBJECTS

FROM the twelfth century onward, it is probably not too much to say that the walls of every parish church were plastered over within, and on the plaster were painted the Bible story and legends of the saints. From the fourteenth century, commencing at Gloucester *c.* 1350, new mastery was gained over the art of staining glass, and in all the larger churches, and in hundreds of minor parish churches, every window repeated the story of the Old and New Testament and the Christian Church. In the greater churches, too, the history of God and His Church was eternalised in stone; in the arcading of Salisbury Chapter house, Worcester quire aisles, Ely Lady chapel and elsewhere. To the wood carver on the other hand, ecclesiastical subjects made little appeal. He was a man of the people, and evidently those whose tastes he was allowed to consider, and did consider, were not bishops and abbots or monks and canons, but just common people like himself. Very many churches possessed sets of over sixty misericords; in many of them room was found for but one scriptural subject, sometimes not even for one.* It may be that in the limited space at his disposal it was difficult to employ subjects which involved the presence of many figures. At times indeed he did grapple with such subjects; *e.g.*, at Ely with the execution of St John Baptist; at Westminster and Worcester with the Judgment of Solomon. Nevertheless the temptation was great to restrict himself to more simple subjects—a pelican, a mermaid, a griffin, or a grinning mask. Another reason doubtless was his felt incapacity to do justice to the human figure and the folds of drapery. If he failed with a lady's face or headgear or figure or dress, everybody noticed it and told him of it; when he carved a wyvern or a griffin or a mask, he was out of the reach of niggling criticism. But probably the reason why the ecclesiastical dignitaries who paid for the work preferred as a rule other than

* In Belgium only one set of misericords, that in St Gertrude, Louvain, has Scripture subjects.

scriptural subjects was that they did not wish a delineation of sacred things to be placed where it would normally be in contact with the least honourable portion of the human person.*

The choice of subjects from the Old Testament is interesting both positively and negatively. In the first place the carvers and their employers, the clergy, did not much care for the Old Testament subjects as such. These had little importance or interest in their eyes except so far as they were symbolical of persons or scenes in the New Testament. Nothing was more insisted upon in mediæval theology and art than the doctrine of type and antitype. In the wood carvings this meant largely restriction to those subjects which the theologians accepted as types of Christ and the Christian Church. Of these some were obvious enough; such as the Brazen Serpent and Jonah and the Whale; but there are probably few readers of this chapter who could tell before they reach a few pages lower down, what is the symbolism of Samson carrying off the gates of Gaza or of Caleb and Joshua carrying a bunch of grapes. Crowds of dramatic and picturesque incidents scattered about the Old Testament, such as the building of the Tower of Babel and many exploits recorded in the Book of Judges are never represented at all; the reason is that they were not types. Another reason is that only a small portion of the Old Testament, outside the Psalms, was included in the Church services; for most folk, at any rate for the carvers, the great part of it, so far as they were concerned, might never have existed. On the other hand the Old Testament narratives that were included in the frequent and regularly recurring Church services were familiar in their mouths as household words; of these representations were multiplied *ad infinitum*.

On misericords scriptural subjects of any kind are in a great minority. Of the churches where most are depicted, Worcester has the best record; its misericords depict the Temptation, the Sacrifice of Isaac, the Golden Calf, the Judgment of Solomon, the Circumcision and the Presentation in the Temple. Lincoln prefers the story of the New Testament, of which it has several scenes; Ely and Ripon have three or four scriptural subjects each. The carvings are divided pretty equally between the Old and the New Testaments. The Temptation is illustrated at Ely and Worcester. At Ely Adam has half eaten his apple, Eve shews hers in her hand; both are beginning to feel

* So also Maeterlinck: "On comprendra aisément que les sculptures qui servirent de sièges, se trouvant en contact avec une partie du corps humain considérée comme peu noble, ne pouvèrent guère faire l'objet d'une decoration religieuse ou symbolique."

ashamed; two apples are left on the tree. Round the foot of it is coiled a serpent's tail; it has, as usual, a well-formed human head. On the left supporter are some queer quadrupeds, and in front an ape. On the right, rabbits are bolting in and out of their holes; a very favourite subject with the carvers (130). At Worcester Adam is eating his apple, and a pretty young Eve holds hers in her hand; the devil has a semi-human head and a fascinating smile (131). In both churches the Expulsion is depicted. At Ely the guilty pair are shrinking from a stern angel with a large sword (132). On the left supporter Adam with his right foot is driving a spade into the ground; on the right supporter is Eve and her distaff; it is the time

"When Adam delved and Eva span."

Ely

Both appear to have children assisting them in their work.* At Worcester Adam and Eve look almost as cheerful over the expulsion as does the angel (133). The *chef-d'œuvre* of the Ely craftsman is the representation of Noah in the Ark. The Ark is a castellated craft with three towers, emblem of the Trinity in Unity, floating on a stormy sea as does God's Church in a tempestuous world; on the right and left are the dove with palm-branch in mouth, and the raven feeding on carrion,

* When a woman was not on her feet at work, she was expected ever to be spinning: no woman sat with her hands idle in her lap; where our grandmothers knitted, their grandmothers span. "Go spin, you jade, go spin" was the advice of the Earl of Pembroke when he drove the Abbess of Wilton out of her nunnery at the Dissolution.

emblematic of those who enter or refuse to enter the Church (134). The dove and raven occur as the supporters of a misericord in Beverley Minster; on a doorway of Lyons cathedral is a raven feeding on a dead hare. Two misericords at Worcester illustrate Genesis xxii:

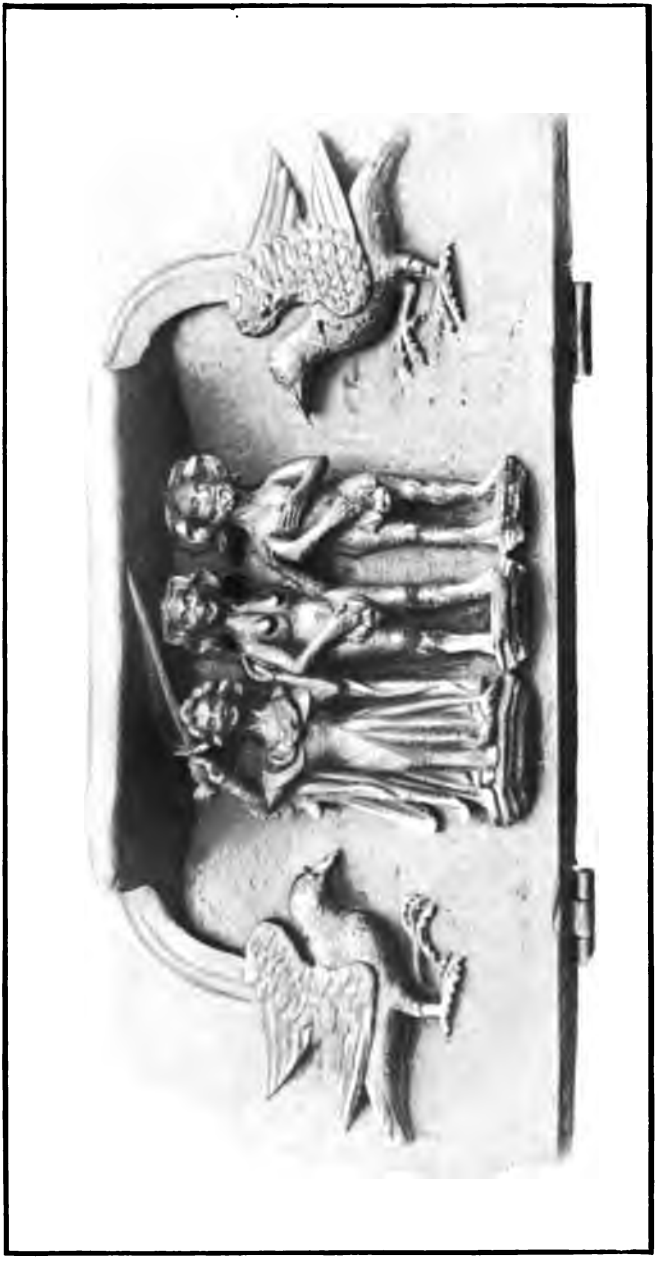
"And Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand and a knife; and they went both of them together. And Abraham built an altar, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood. And Abraham stretched forth his hand and took the knife to slay his son. And the angel of the Lord called unto him out of heaven and said, 'Abraham, Abraham.' And he said, 'Here am I.' And he said, 'Lay not thine hand upon the lad.' And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and behold behind him a

Worcester

ram caught in a thicket by his horns. And Abraham went and took the ram and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son."

On the first misericord Isaac bears two faggots of wood on his shoulders, which, to strengthen the symbolism, are arranged in the form of a cross; Abraham bears the fire in his left hand and a sword in his right (134). In the other is seen the altar with the faggots beneath ready to be lighted; Isaac kneels on the altar, pleading for mercy; Abraham with uplifted sword is about to slay, but the sword point is gripped by a hand issuing from the clouds; the ram has arrived; and behind is the bush (135). The next example, also from Worcester, on the left shews Moses, who as usual has horns, and who holds in his left hand the two tables of the law; on the right is Aaron;

Ely



Worcester

Ely

in the centre, on a pillar, stands the golden calf, which, however, has the body and legs of a bird (135). Behind is probably Joshua, who, as the minister of Moses, had gone up with him into the mount of God. A misericord in Beverley Minster refers to Caleb and Joshua, who were sent out by Moses to spy out the land of Canaan (135):

"And they came unto the brook of Eshcol, and cut down from thence a branch with one cluster of grapes, and they bare it between two upon a staff. And they went and came to Moses and to Aaron and to all the congregation of the children of Israel, and said, We came unto the land whither thou sentest us, and surely it floweth with milk and honey; and this is the fruit of it."

Worcester

Worcester

Worcester

Beverley Minster

The two spies, with the single enormous bunch of grapes, are also represented at Ripon and Hoogstraeten, Belgium. By dint of a little ingenuity this subject was given a mystic meaning. The juice of the grape is the blood of Christ; and as the juice is contained in the berries, the bunch of grapes symbolises the body of Christ. Furthermore, one bearer of the bunch of grapes from Canaan turns his back to the bunch of grapes, which is Christ; the other turns his face to them; so the Jews turned their back on Christ, but Christians look to Him as Lord. Accordingly, on the reliquary of the true cross at Langres, the bearer in front wears the conical cap of the Jews. Both at Ripon and Hoogstraeten again appears the city of Gaza, and

Ripon

its great gateway minus its doors (136). It was there that they of Gaza

"compassed in Samson and laid wait for him all night, saying, In the morning, when it is day, we shall kill him. And Samson lay till midnight, and arose at midnight, and took the doors of the gate of the city, and the two posts, and went away with them, bar and all, and put them upon his shoulders, and carried them up to the top of a hill that is before Hebron."

Samson is Our Lord, and Gaza is the tomb where the Jews think they have buried Him for evermore; but before day-break He breaks forth from the sepulchre, and like Samson goeth forth to the hills, which are Heaven.*

* This subject occurs also in a hollow molding of the Kirkham chantry screen at Paignton, *c.* 1526.—G. C. D.

The binding of Samson is shewn on a misericord in Hereford cathedral. The story is continued on a misericord at Gloucester, where Delilah is seen cutting off his hair herself (137). It is also represented over the doorway of the south aisle of York Minster; and on misericords in Amiens cathedral, Montbenoit, Doubs, and Hoogstraeten, Belgium.

"And she made him sleep upon her knees; and she called for a man, and she caused him to shave off the seven locks of his head; and she began to afflict him, and his strength went from him."

Very frequently the strangling of a lion is depicted. Where the victor is a man of mature age, or bearded, the reference is

Gloucester

probably to Samson; *e.g.*, in Beverley St Mary and Ely and in the charming carving at Norwich (138).

"Then went Samson down, and his father and mother, to the vineyards of Timnath; and behold a young lion roared against him. And the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him, and he rent him as he would have rent a kid, and he had nothing in his hand; but he told not his father or his mother what he had done."

On the other hand when a youth is represented, it is more likely that David is meant; *e.g.*, at Sherborne (112).

"And David said unto Saul, Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock. And I went after him and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth; and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard and smote him and slew him."

The matter is complicated yet further by the fact that a similar exploit is told of Richard Cœur-de-Lion, and is depicted here and there, *e.g.*, on incised tiles. When told of Samson or David, the story is typical of the power of Christ to deliver the Christian from the power of evil.

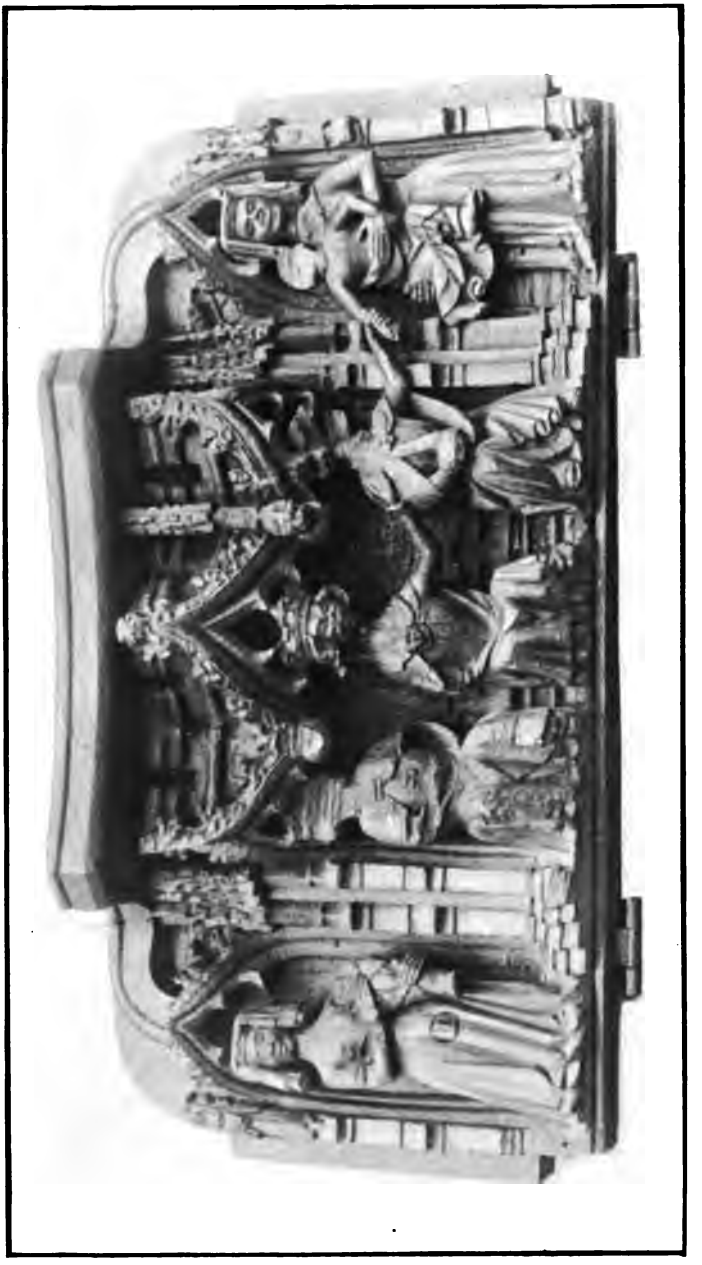
In several cases the slaying of a giant is represented, *e.g.*, at Gloucester and Westminster; and the reference may be to the slaying of Goliath by David; but it is quite as likely that the incident comes from some such story as *Valentine and Orson* or *Jack and the Beanstalk*. At Gayton, Northants, is depicted the difficult subject of the death of Absalom.* There is a superb representation of the Judgment of Solomon at Westminster and another at Worcester (139). In the latter the king,

Norwich

flanked by his officials, sits beneath a tabernacle of characteristic fourteenth century type of cusped ogee arches with foliated crockets on arch, pinnacle and finial, battlemented above, and supported by staged buttresses. On the left is the woman whose

"child died in the night, because she overlaid it. And she arose at midnight," says the other, "and took my son from beside me while thine handmaid slept, and laid it in her bosom, and laid her dead child in my bosom. And when I rose in the morning to give my child suck, behold it was dead. But when I had considered it in the morning, behold it was not my son which I did bear. And the other woman said, Nay; but the living is my son, and the dead is thy son. And this said, No, but the dead is thy son and the living is my son. Thus they spake before the king. Then said the king,

* On a misericord in Dordrecht cathedral is carved the story of Jael and Sisera; Jael is driving a large nail into Sisera's head with a mallet.—G. C. D.



Worcester

Ripon

Bring me a sword. And they brought a sword before the king. And the king said, Divide the living child in two, and give half to the one, and half to the other. Then spake the woman, whose the living child was, unto the king, for her bowels yearned upon her son, and she said, O my lord, give her the living child and in no wise slay it. But the other said, Let it be neither mine nor thine, but divide it. Then the king answered and said, Give her the living child and in no wise slay it; she is the mother thereof And all Israel heard of the judgment which the king had judged; and they feared the king, for they saw that the wisdom of God was in him, to do judgment."

The official on the right has just handed over a large living child, who is very much alive, and kicking vigorously; while the other woman has a diminutive dead baby in swaddling clothes.

Ripon

At Ripon the artist has tackled a most difficult bit of perspective. Down below is a tempestuous sea and a fish waiting to engulf Jonah, who is being cast overboard by a crew of three men from a ship; note the shrouds, the crow's nest on the top of the mast, and the high stern with the tiller (140). In the next example the fish is casting up Jonah, and the prophet clings tightly to the rocky shore, on which are pine trees. A misericord in Lincoln Minster may be descriptive of the story of Judith and Holofernes,

"who took great delight in her, and drank much more wine than he had drunk at any time in one day since he was born. And he slept. Then Judith came to the pillar of the bed, which was at Holofernes' head and took down his fauchion from thence, and approached to his bed and said, Strengthen me, O Lord God of Israel, this day. And she smote twice upon his neck with all her might, and she took away his head from him, and gave Holofernes his head to her maid."

Subjects from the Apocrypha, however, are represented so very seldom that this identification must be regarded as doubtful.

CHAPTER XIV

NEW TESTAMENT SUBJECTS

SCENES from the New Testament are comparatively few. At Lincoln the Annunciation is represented. The favourite subject of the three Kings of the East bringing gifts at the Nativity is also represented at Lincoln. Shepherds, three in number, are shewn at Gloucester,* gazing up with astonishment, as does their dog, at the Star of Bethlehem; they all have crooks and the implements of their trade, including a tar-box to dress sores on the sheep (142). The Circumcision is represented at Worcester;

Gloucester

the little child stands on an altar, and the priest, with horns to shew that he is of priestly caste, holds a knife in his right hand (143). The companion picture represents the Presentation in the Temple; the child stands before an altar, the priest and the mother behind him. Over the altar is a censer or a suspended pyx; on the altar is a single candle. Above, and to the right,

* There is a good painting of this subject on a window splay at Cocking church, Sussex.—G. C. D.

Worcester

is a foliated corbel, which being an architectural member, here signifies the Temple. At Ely is a naïve attempt to depict the death of John the Baptist. On the left Herod and Herodias are seated at a royal banquet, while the daughter of Herodias "dances," or as another translation has it more correctly, "tumbles" before them. In the centre John has left a castellated gaol; the executioner with one hand seizes him by the hair, and with the other uplifts his sword to strike; in front kneels the damsel with the charger. On the right she hands to her mother the head in a charger (144). A misericord in Winchester College chapel may refer to the parable of the Good

Worcester

Ely

Shepherd. In the centre a countryman with his hat tied under his chin is carrying a sheep under each arm; while on the right another shepherd has apparently run off with the sheep on his shoulder, and has dropped his crook in alarm at the detection of the theft. But on the left supporter is a figure who seems to have no connection with the parable; so that it may be but a picture of country life. It is possible that the head of Our Lord is portrayed here and there; *e.g.*, on a misericord at Minster in Thanet where on either side are two coarse faces of low type, which may represent the two thieves. At Gayton, Northants, three female figures in long robes under arcading have been taken to be the Three Marys. At Lincoln the Resurrection is depicted; on a supporter Christ appears to St Mary Magdalene. At Sherborne the Last Judgment is represented; on either side are the dead rising from their graves and holding out their hands in entreaty to Our Lord, whose feet rest on the rainbow or vault of heaven, and who shews the wounds on His hands and feet (146). In a beautiful series of bosses in the vault of the fourteenth century church of the Celestins at Avignon Our Lord is represented in the apse shewing His wounds, while on the minor bosses around angels bear the instruments of the Passion. These are held by one of the cherubim with four wings, in a Chester misericord (146). The wood vault of the presbytery of Winchester cathedral is covered with paintings of the instruments of the Passion; so also the back bench on the northern side of the nave at Fressingfield, Suffolk. On a misericord in Chester cathedral the angels are shewn watching by the Sepulchre; at Lincoln there is a representation of the Ascension. At Lincoln, the cathedral church of Our Lady, two misericords depict the Assumption and the Coronation of the Blessed Virgin. At Chester is a subject which is usually described as the Virgin and the Child; but Mr G. C. Druce has pointed out that the central figure on the right is a crowned king, and that the two central figures are seated side by side; therefore the subject may be the Coronation of the Virgin; in which case, however, one would expect the flanking figures to be winged angels (146).

Many New Testament subjects are never represented at all in mediæval art. Representations of the miracles, which are common in the Early Christian art of the Catacombs, are later almost unknown; such examples as the healing of the paralytic, the woman with the issue of blood and the man born blind, the resurrection of the centurion's daughter and of the son of the widow of Nain occur in the thirteenth century art of France, but even there are rare. As a rule, only two epochs of Our Lord's life

Sherborne

Chester

Chester

are represented pictorially, His infancy and His Passion; the intermediate period is passed over; practically the only exceptions are representations of the Baptism, the Temptation and the Transfiguration, and the Marriage at Cana. Other scenes from the intermediate period of His life do indeed occur, but not so much to illustrate the life of Christ as that of some other actor in the Biblical drama; *e.g.*, in a church or a window dedicated to St Peter the call of the Apostles may occur; or the raising of Lazarus in connection with the two Marys. The following are the only scenes which are commonly represented in the art of the Middle Ages: I. In the Early Life of Christ; the Nativity, the Adoration of the Shepherds, the Massacre of the Innocents, the Flight into Egypt, the Circumcision, the Magi, the Presentation in the Temple; II. In His Preaching Life; the Baptism, the Wedding at Cana, the Temptation, the Transfiguration; III. In His Last Days; the Entry into Jerusalem, the Last Supper, the Washing of Feet, the Passion with all its details, the Descent from the Cross, the Burial, the Resurrection, His Appearances, and the Ascension. It was these scenes and none other that the Church dwelt on at Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Holy Week and the following week; these too were the chief subjects of the miracle plays and mysteries. The sculptors carved what the Church set forth at her great festivals;* not what they read in the New Testament, for they could not read.

* On the services at these festivals see Male, p. 236.

CHAPTER XV

MIRACLE PLAYS

A CERTAIN number of the designs are no doubt taken from or inspired by the old Miracle Plays and Moralities which are said to have been introduced into England in the eleventh century and to have been performed in the churches so late as the middle of the sixteenth century. At Beverley the canons themselves took part in these plays, and accounts are preserved giving the cost of the items of the performance.* In these plays the Devil was usually the protagonist, and was a jovial fellow,

Ludlow

very popular with the audience. Punch, the descendant of the ancient Iniquity, is to this day carried off by the devil at the end of each performance, in compliance with ancient custom. On a misericord in Beverley Minster a miser is counting his money, while a devil is crouching to seize him; on the same misericord Satan with uplifted mace is pursuing and about to strike down a lost soul. At Caversham, Westminster and Ludlow (148) the devil is carrying off various victims to the maw of hell, just as in the moralities.

* See Mr Leach in the Surtees volumes.

CHAPTER XVI

THE SAINTS AND DOCTORS OF THE CHURCH

IN the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the screens of our churches, great and small, were panelled with painted figures of the prophets, evangelists, martyrs and doctors of the Church.* In the windows the design of the tracery was revolutionised and the area of stained glass enormously enlarged in order to provide tier upon tier of the saints and doctors of the Church. So it was in stone in the niches of the Lady chapels of Ely and

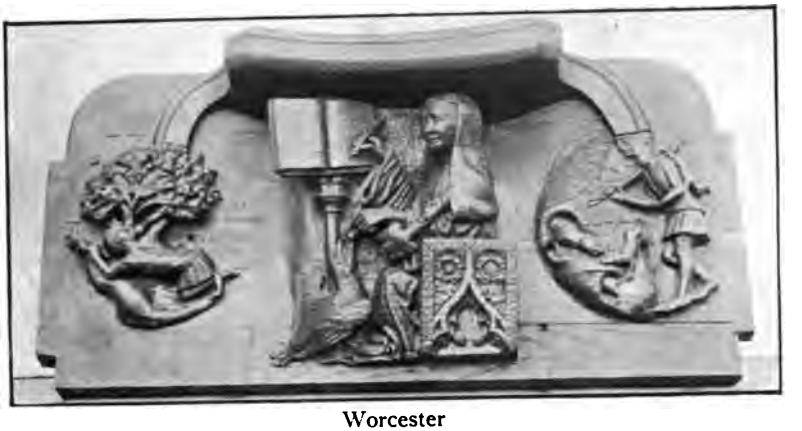
Cockington

Westminster, the façades of Wells, Salisbury and Lichfield, and the reredoses of Christchurch, Milton, St Alban's, Winchester, Southwark, New College and All Souls', Oxford. On the misericords such representations are very few. Of the evangelists, St Matthew occurs on misericords at Cockington, Christchurch, and St Gregory, Norwich; and St Mark at the two latter. St Luke occurs at Cockington; he is shewn seated

* See G. E. Fox in the *Victoria History of Norfolk*, ii. 547; and Dom Bede Camm in Part III. of *Rood Screens and Rood Lofts*, by F. Bligh Bond.

and writing his Gospel; and that there shall be no mistake about it, his symbol, a winged ox, is repeated twice and the words SANCTUS LUCAS are inscribed above (149).* At Worcester is a personage writing a book, the inkstand being held by an eagle; it may therefore be meant for St John; but if so, what is the signification of the little bird being seized by a small beast or snake whose head protrudes beneath the writer's hood? (151) (The right supporter is identified by Mr C. B. Shuttleworth as a representation of ferreting rabbits.) At Lincoln is shewn a castle gate; two men are piling up faggots and blowing up a fire with a bellows beneath a cauldron in which stood a figure now gone. Mr W. H. St John Hope suggests that the reference may be to St John Evangelist, who, according to a tradition preserved by Tertullian and Jerome, was thrown by command of the Emperor Domitian into a cauldron of boiling oil placed before the Porta Latina, but emerged unharmed. Our English calendar still counts May 8, "St John ante port. Lat.," among its festivals; and every year St John's College, Cambridge, observes its annual commemoration of benefactors on the festival of "St John before the Latin Gate." The identification of the misericord at Lincoln is rendered the more probable by the fact that St John was the name-saint of John Welburne, Precentor of the cathedral, who presented the stalls; he died in 1380. St George, the patron saint of England, naturally occurs frequently. He is shewn in Norwich cathedral in one of the finest of all the misericords; the dragon grips a lamb in his claws and St George is driving a spear down his gullet (2). At Stratford-on-Avon St George tramples on the dragon and impales it with his spear; while the beautiful princess whom he has rescued kneels behind and prays anxiously for the success of her preserver (151); the beautiful princess occurs also in St George's, Windsor. Sometimes the knight is on horseback, as at Gloucester. At Chichester is a misericord supposed to represent a lady fighting a lion, or else the more usual subject of St George and the dragon (151). If, however, it were St George, he would not be in flowing robes, but in armour. And if it were a lady, she would keep her feet under her dress. It may be a representation of an angel depicted in the earlier manner; it was not till *c.* 1350 that angels were "womanised"; before that they were depicted as a sort of sexless men. Or it may be a monk or ecclesiastic; and if so, symbolises the Church attacking the Evil Principle. St Gabriel appears on a supporter in the scene of the Annunciation

* Originally the sculptors and carvers had no patron saint of their gilds; later they joined with the painters in the patronage of St Luke.



Worcester

Stratford-on-Avon

Chichester

at Lincoln. At Sherborne a maiden with flowing hair and circlet on her forehead appears kneeling in prayer upon a prostrate dragon; this would represent St Margaret, into whose prison a dragon was introduced; the beast swallowed her whole, but when St Margaret made the sign of the cross within him, the dragon brake asunder and she emerged unhurt (152). At Ely is shewn a horseman with long spurs, and a cripple with a large head; the latter has a crutch, inserted to make it clear that he is a beggar. The knight holds something now broken off (153). The reference is to St Martin, who was originally a gay young officer in the Guards. One day, when riding, a naked beggar accosted him, and he cut his cavalry cloak in two with his sword and gave one half to the shivering beggar. That night he had

Sherborne

a dream and saw Our Lord, to whom it was that he had given relief. This scene occurs also in stained glass at Cockington, Devon. At Ely a misericord depicts the favourite legend of St Giles or Ægidius, an abbot who in the sixth or eighth century lived a hermit's life in the forest of St Gilles in Provence. To his quiet cell the beasts of the forest made resort; and on one occasion a great king—Childebert or Theodoric or the King of the Visigoths—while hunting in the forest, shot at a hind which had taken refuge with St Giles, but missed the creature and wounded the hermit in the leg, so that he was lame ever after. In the centre is seen the hind trustingly laying its head on St Giles' knee, who is telling his beads; on the left supporter is a hunter with bended bow, the arrow from which is quivering in the hermit's leg; on the right is another hunter (153). Another

Ely

Ely

Ely

misericord at Ely may perhaps depict some other story of St Giles. On the left are hinds chased by two hounds ; in the centre horse and rider have had a bad fall ; on the right is a monk or a woman praying at an altar, on which is a missal ; above is an arch, parapets and windows denoting "church" (98). At Ely is a misericord in which a young man is making proposals to a maiden who clasps her hands in prayer (153). Perhaps this is a reference to the monkish legends of the virgin queen, the abbess and patron saint of Ely. Twice she was married, they say, against her will, and twice she resisted her husbands' entreaties and remained a maid. Or the reference may be to some country maid who followed St Etheldreda's virtuous example. (The left supporter consists of a skull wreathed with foliage.) Chester cathedral

Chester

was originally dedicated to St Werburgh ; and one of the misericords depicts a favourite story about her miraculous gifts. It seems that she was Prioress of the religious house at Weedon, Northants, in the seventh century, and was prayed to free the crops from a devastating flock of wild geese. She bade them come to her, and shut them up for the night in a stable. When she came in the morning to let them out, one was missing, which the other geese told her one of her servants had killed and cooked. She restored the cooked goose to life and it went off with its companions, and the crops thenceforth were inviolate so far as wild geese were concerned (154). In the Chester misericord the centrepiece shews two groups ; in one is a female figure with a crook or crosier, standing near what looks like a font ; the other shews a kneeling man, perhaps the thief returning the

Higham Ferrers

Beverley Minster

St David's

stolen goose. In the left supporter the thief is in the pound with the geese; in the right-hand supporter he is confessing to a person who holds a staff. Of Mildred of Kent, cousin of St Werburgh, the emblem is a hart. This occurs on a misericord in the church of Minster in Thanet. The story is that Mildred's mother was given by King Edgar I. of Kent as much land in Thanet for her monastery as her tame hart could compass in a single run; and that the hart made a record run for the purpose, the course of which is said to be marked in an ancient map in the possession of Trinity Hall, Cambridge, copied in 1414 from a much earlier map.* The Vernicle, or handkerchief of St Veronica miraculously imprinted with the visage of Our Lord possibly occurs on one or two misericords; *e.g.*, at Higham Ferrers (155). Of the Fathers and Doctors of the Church, so commonly painted on the wooden screens, none appear on the misericords, unless the angel holding a heart, seen in Beverley Minster, be the emblem of St Augustine (155). At St David's a misericord is said to represent the sea-sickness of St Govan, uncle of St David, who was sent with two disciples to Rome by St Elfynt to obtain a correct form of the mass (155).

* Miss Arnold Foster's *Dedications*, 360.

CHAPTER XVII

SYMBOLISM

SYMBOLISM is conspicuously rare on the misericords; they were carved by simple folk for simple folk. The symbolism of the peacock has been already referred to (page 5). At Lincoln is a knight in armour fighting seven dragons; at New College, Oxford, is a seven-headed hydra; both probably denote the seven deadly sins. A naked child issuing from a spiral shell and confronting a dragon or a wyvern occurs at Lincoln and elsewhere, denoting

Beverley Minster

the conflict of purity and vice. In Beverley Minster there is a pretty carving of the hen and chickens; the reference may be to St Matthew xxiii. 37 and St Luke xiii. 34; this subject is also an emblem of spring (157). The hen and chickens was adopted as a device by James IV. of Scotland in 1460, and by Catharine de Medici and others. The Lamb and Flag is rare; an example occurs at Passenham, Northants; it is of course the

Paschal Lamb. The Lamb and Flag was the coat of arms of the Templars and the crest of the Merchant Taylors. It is a common inn sign; at Swindon the lamb has a spear, to which is appended a red, white and blue streamer. Apart from the above and a few others, symbolism is non-existent, with the one conspicuous example of the animals of the Bestiaries, which are of course symbolical in the very highest degree.

CHAPTER XVIII

SATIRE ON JOUSTS AND TOURNAMENTS

OF all the institutions of chivalry the most highly esteemed and respected was the joust or single combat, and the tournament or contest of two parties of knights. But the common folk had no esteem or respect either for one or the other. The tournament involved too many figures for representation on a misericord; but the joust could well be depicted. At Worcester a joust does actually take place between two knights and is carved most

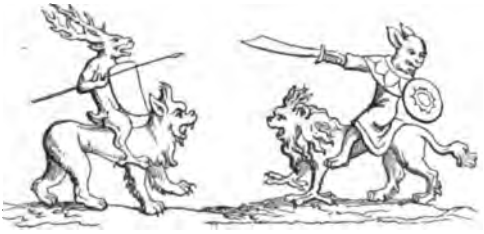
Worcester

spiritedly; but the point of the scene is not the victory of one knight and the discomfiture of the other, but the horror-stricken expression of the man with the drums, in danger of being crushed by the overthrow of the defeated knight's charger (159). In the example illustrated from Bristol the scene is patently a parody (160), as it is in another Bristol misericord, where the two combatants, each armed with a spear, are mounted, one on a goose, the other on a hog. The artist prefers, however, not to represent

the riders as human beings at all; no civilised man in his senses, he thinks, would engage in these ridiculous contests with all their

Bristol

tedious etiquette of observances. So the joust becomes a combat between two savage men, or wodehouses, as at Chester; or



Queen Mary's Psalter

between a wodehouse and a wyvern as at Manchester; or between a wodehouse and a cockatrice, as at Faversham, or between a camel and a unicorn, as at Manchester; or between a camel and

a dragon, as at Lincoln and Ripon; or very frequently between a lion and a dragon, or between two dragons and wyverns. Some of the illustrations no doubt burlesque the exploits of Richard I. and his crusaders. In an illustration in a Psalter of Queen Mary, which was illuminated at the beginning of the fourteenth century, the combatants are shewn one with the Christian sword, the other with the Saracenic scimitar; in another one rider is a stag and has the Christian lance and shield, the other is a monkey with the Saracenic scimitar and circular targe (160).

CHAPTER XIX

SATIRE ON RELIGION

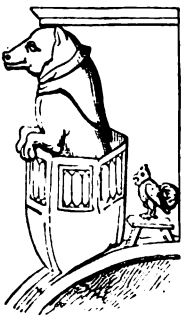
IN the latter days of the English Catholic Church, it has been said, the chief object of art was not so much to edify as to satirise and ridicule. Carving and sculpture became weapons of offence, wielded by Christian against Christian. Monks hated friars, and despised the secular clergy, our parish priests; the parish priests owed the loss of the great tithes of many of their churches to the monks, and of marriage and confessional fees to the friars, who undersold them: the parish priest hated monk and friar alike. This view was set forth strongly by Viollet-le-Duc, and seems now to be almost accepted as a truism. It is certainly grossly exaggerated. In the literature of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries there is indeed plentiful satire of ecclesiastical dignitaries, sometimes good-natured, as in Chaucer, sometimes fierce and malevolent, as in Langland's *Piers Plowman*. But ecclesiastical art, whether in wood or stone or glass, was put up by and at the expense of ecclesiastics, at any rate in the great churches of the monks and canons. It is hardly likely that they would allow, still less that they would pay, for themselves to be satirised by their own workmen. And this is borne out by facts. To read what people say about the subjects of the carvings in our churches, one would imagine that satirical subjects are the most common of all. As a matter of fact they are comparatively rare. And, in addition, in several cases instances are quoted as satirical which only seem satirical because they are misunderstood. Thus on the left supporter of a misericord at New College, Oxford, a monk is seen seated, hearing the confession of a novice, and giving him absolution, while a mischievous little devil throws ridicule on the whole function, standing on the penitent's head and pulling the hood over his eyes. This is all very well; but as a matter of fact the scene is often represented elsewhere, *e.g.*, on such a Seven Sacrament font as that at Westhall, Suffolk,* and the meaning always is that in genuine and heartfelt repentance the devil comes out of a man; and so

* Illustrated in the writer's *Fonts and Font Covers*, 261.

he is represented as departing from the penitent. In the example at New College the right supporter shews the penitent inflicting on himself by a scourge the penance which has been ordered by his confessor. In a large number of instances the ecclesiastic satirised is preaching; he is almost always represented as a fox. At Boston he is a fox, and is seated in a chair,

Boston

and in his left hand holds a crosier; he is therefore either a bishop or an abbot; he reads from a book held by an ass to a congregation consisting of a cock and five hens; he has seized the cock by the neck, but still goes on reading or preaching to the edification of the hens (163). At Christchurch he is seen in a cowl, preaching from a pulpit, while behind a diminutive cock acts as clerk (163). At Beverley St Mary he is in a cowl, preaching from a pulpit to two ecclesiastics, who hold scrolls in their hands; on the ground sit two monkeys, also holding scrolls. In Beverley Minster there is a cowled fox who is preaching from a pulpit to a congregation of geese; his friend the ape acts as clerk, and has killed one goose, which hangs from a stick slung over the ape's shoulder; the preacher holds a rosary in his right hand (164). At Bristol also a cowled fox preaches to a congregation of geese. On a finely carved misericord at Ripon Reynard preaches to a cock and a goose (164); very many other examples might be quoted. Now what do they amount to? Not to satire on religion, but to satire on preaching, which is not the same thing at all. It is entirely a modern idea that true and undefiled religion consists in sitting still in church once a week and being talked to. It was an innovation, and not a welcome one, to conservative Churchmen in the twelfth century to hear that Abbot



Christchurch

Beverley Minster 1520

Samson of Ely had taken to preaching in his abbey church, and that in English. The English laity indeed, then as now, liked preaching; and in one instance they presented their parish priest, because, as they told the archdeacon, he preached so seldom; he was a simple man, they said, and a poor preacher, but they liked to hear him. Bishop after bishop tried their hardest to get the priests to preach, even going so far as to write their sermons for them; but the parochial clergy offered a stubborn resistance, and still more the occupants of the stalls in the monastic and canons' churches. The preaching so much desired had to be supplied, and was supplied to a large extent,

Ripon

independently of the parish priests and monks and canons. It was supplied from the thirteenth century by the Black Friars or Dominicans, the Grey Friars or Franciscans, the White Friars or Carmelites. Crosses were put up by the parishes all over the country, by the roadside or in the churchyard, and there from the friars the parishioners got the greatly desired sermons. But all this made the practice of preaching only the more odious to monk, canon and parish priest. And it would seem that they allowed their feelings about preaching and preaching friars to find a vent in such misericords as those in Beverley St Mary and the Minster, Ripon and Boston. Sometimes the very text of the preaching friar is given: it formerly was to be seen in a window in St Martin's, Leicester; "*Testis est mihi Deus quam cupiam vos omnes visceribus meis*"; "God is my witness how I desire you with all my heart." But the last two words admit also of being rendered "inside my stomach"; and this was thought so excellent a pun that it occurs again and again. Again, all the Preaching orders were ordered by their founders to be mendicant; they were to follow to the letter the injunctions given by Our Lord when He sent forth His disciples to preach, and they were to have no private property. But the simplicity of the early days of St Francis and St Dominic soon passed away, and the Friars' houses and churches became as rich and gorgeous as those of the monks or canons. In the later days the mendicancy of the Friars became a mock and pretence. So at Nantwich one of these ecclesiastics, cunning and rapacious, is represented with a fox's head, marching along with a goose in one hand and a hare slung on a stick in the other (165). In Beverley St Mary, two of them, again represented as foxes, seem to be receiving from their superior, who is reading from a scroll, injunctions that they are to "take nothing for their journey but a staff only" (Mark x. 10); each fox holds in his hands a staff of pastoral shape; but has provisioned himself for the journey with a goose (166). At Beverley Minster the rosary in the preacher's hand may be intended to shew that he is a follower of St Dominic, who introduced the rosary to help his brethren to keep an accurate tale of their Paternosters and Ave Marias. On the other hand it occurs at Ely (153) and in other cases where no such reference is possible. In several examples monks and laymen alike are shewn on the way to hell mouth; there

Nantwich

Beverley St Mary

is no specially satiric force in this; it merely is a statement of a plain fact that the virtue of his office will not protect an ecclesiastic any more than a layman from the doom that awaits the evil liver. At Windsor a misericord shews three monks and a fox with a goose in his mouth—the conventional representation of a friar—being trundled off by a devil in a wheelbarrow to hell mouth: St George's chapel was served by Secular Canons, and they had no compunction in portraying the parlous condition of monks and friars. At Ely (166) a man and a woman are seated together, presumably at church; he has a missal on his knee, she has a rosary; but they are attending neither to

Ely

the one nor the other; their minds are filled with bad thoughts, and the Evil One has got them in his grasp. He has a repellent sensual visage and clawed fingers; what is probably a replica of him is carved at Over. A similar subject occurs at New College, Oxford, where, however, the demon has bat's wings. A picture in Notre Dame de Recouvrance, Brest, portrays the devil noting down the idle words of two women who are gossiping during mass. The subject is often treated in sculpture, in the miniatures of missals, and in tapestry designs; it is thus referred to in a poem written by Pierre de Grosnet in 1553:

"Notez en l'ecclise de Dieu
Femmes ensemble caquetoyent.
Le diable y estoit en ung lieu
Escripvant ce qu'elles disoyent."

So far none of the satire is directed against the most sacred part of Church ceremonial, the office of the Mass. On a capital

Strasburg

of Strasburg cathedral, however, there was formerly represented the funeral of Reynard the fox (167). He is borne on a bier by the boar and the goat; the hare carries a taper, the wolf a cross, the bear the holy water and aspersoir; the ass chants the responses from a service book resting on the head of a cat, and the stag chants the mass at an altar on which is a chalice and a service book. Here, however, the intention was not to throw ridicule on the Mass, any more than it was in the service held by the Boy Bishop on the Feast of Fools. It is difficult to say as much, however, of a misericord at Worcester, where a vested fox appears to be saying grace over what appears to be a sheep's head lying on an altar (92). At St David's is a goose with a human head to which, according to Professor Freeman, a fox in a cowl is offering the sacramental wafer. But as a matter of fact the fox is dressed as a woman, and what she holds is a platter and cake, not a paten and wafer.*

* Fryer, 52.

CHAPTER XX

SATIRE ON DOCTORS AND DENTISTS

SOMETIMES the fox is in palmer's garb; there had grown up a class of professional pilgrims, who could be hired to go as substitutes on pilgrimages, and were in no good repute. The laity in general came in for the lash just as much as the clergy and the pilgrim; especially that huge humbug, the mediæval doctor. He is most disrespectfully represented as an ape. At

Beverley St Mary

Beverley St Mary's is a surgical case (168). A wodehouse has driven an enormous arrow through Reynard the fox, who offers a purse of money to the doctor in return for a bottle of liniment. At Windsor the fox is lying on his back sick unto death; the nurse is pouring medicine into his mouth; the doctor has brought another bottle of medicine; both nurse and doctor are apes. A supporter in Beverley Minster shews the monkey again acting as sick nurse to his friend Reynard (99). At Windsor again the forcible administration of medicine is portrayed; the patient is held down by two men, a third forces a

toad down his throat. Powdered toad and such nastinesses were to be found commonly as ingredients in mediæval medicines; a mediæval patient did not believe there was strength or virtue in medicine, unless it was nauseous. The doctor is very frequently portrayed with a flask in his hand, in which case he is represented as an ape; *e.g.*, at Beverley Minster and St Mary's, Boston, Bristol, Cartmel, Faversham and Manchester (75). On the Portail des Libraires, Rouen, a flask is being examined by a man with a goose's body. The flask was a glass vessel containing urine. Debased as was the medical profession in the Middle Ages, yet in one respect, the examination of the urine, they were punctiliously careful. As early as the twelfth century, Gilles de Corbeil, premier physician to Philip Augustus of France, had written a volume of medical poetry, and one of its four books was entitled "Liber de urinis." And in a thirteenth century version of the story of Reynard the Fox, King Noble, the Lion, who is sick, details his symptoms at vast length, till Reynard interrupts him with

"Aportez moi un orinal
Et si verrai dedenz le mal."

This done, Reynard sets to work in thoroughly professional fashion:

"Li orinax fu aportez,
Nobles est en séant levez,
Si a pissié plus que demi;
Et dit Renard, Bien est issi.
Lors le prent et au soleil va,
L'orinal sus en haut leva,
Moult le regarde apertement,
Torne et retorne moult sovent
Por véoir s'il se torneroit."

He takes the glass flask to the window, examines it by the light passing through it, and watches whether it will change colour or coagulate. The examination of two flasks of urine is illustrated on the frontispiece of a book on medicine published in 1487 by a celebrated Italian physician, Bartolemeo Montagnana; and in one of the miniatures of a Book of Hours belonging to Anne of Brittany, the two patron saints of medicine, Cosmo and Damien, are dressed as physicians, and one of them is holding up to the light a glass flask of urine. Among the illustrations of a paper on a pontifical written in the fourteenth century are shewn a dropsical man come for advice about his disorder, and a crane who probably wants a bone

extracted from his throat; in both cases the doctor is an ape.* At Malvern the sick person is in bed, nude as usual; behind is the nurse; the invalid appears to have swallowed one big jug of

Ely

medicine, and is giving it back to the doctor, who is handing her another jugful. Nor does the dentist fare any better; nay rather he fares worse, for he is represented at Ely as the devil himself (170).

* Rev. E. S. Dewick in *Archæologia*, liv.

CHAPTER XXI

SATIRE ON MUSIC AND DANCING

IN earlier days the minstrel had held an honoured position in social life: he was a welcome guest at the baronial board; he sang the exploits of the knight and the praises of the lady; he was the friend of prince and princess; knight and squire and lord and king themselves were proud of their accomplishments in minstrelsy; all Navarre re-echoed with the strains of amateur musicians of the noblest rank. Even in the fifteenth century some of their ancient repute survived; in Beverley the minstrels were still an important gild and presented a pillar to the new nave of their parish church; immortalising their generosity by having a group of statuettes of minstrels carved beneath the capital of their pillar. But for the most part the noble profession of minstrelsy had fallen into disrepute. The minstrel had become a mendicant, and ranked with the bearleader, the posture-maker and the street acrobat. The craftsmen who carved the misericords are never tired of pouring contempt on him and his trade. So pigs and goats and cats and hares and foxes and bears and asses, and, above all, apes, are seen playing harp and bagpipes and fiddle and rebec and psaltery and flute and pipe and drum and hurdy-gurdy. At Durham, Manchester and Beverley Minster a pig is playing the *harp*. In Chichester cathedral a man is playing a small harp resting on his knee; this is the old English harp. In Beverley Minster it is the tall Irish harp, resting on the ground; this did not become popular till the end of the sixteenth century; these Beverley misericords were placed in the Minster in 1520, so that this is an early example (174). Unlike the modern harp, which is of French origin, it has a curved front pillar. The *psaltery* was a sound-box, usually triangular, on which were stretched metal strings tightened by pegs; it appears on the right supporter of a misericord at Worcester cathedral; where a winged centaur plays it by striking the strings with the fingers of both hands. There is another example on the right supporter at Ely. The *cithern* or *gittern* is pear-shaped, and like the psaltery and lute, is played by the fingers. It is seen to the

right at Lavenham (13). The male creature ridicules the lady by playing on the bellows with a crutch as bow. The fiddle and the rebec were played with a bow. The *fiddle* had an oblong body and incurvations at the side. In Hereford cathedral (172) the cat appropriately plays the fiddle; while the goat sings and accompanies himself on the *citole*. In Winchester and Chichester cathedrals one pig sings, while another accompanies it on the violin. Originally it was considered to be a high grade instrument. The Blessed Virgin, it was said, loved the sound of the violin; "*La douce mère Dieu ama son de viele.*" At Worcester an angel sits under a beautiful fourteenth century canopy, playing the *crowde* or *crowth* (173). But the violin also fell into disrepute; in the end it became the instrument played by blind beggars on

Hereford Cathedral

the roadside. The "*symphony*" or "*hurdy gurdy*" was "the earliest string instrument provided with key mechanism, and was in use as early as the eleventh century. "It enabled a succession of consecutive octaves and fifths to be rendered with great ease and precision; and was apparently used in the churches to accompany the 'organum' or harmonised plain song";* it is seen on a sculpture in Cirencester church (173); it is said to occur also at Boston and Ely. Single *pipes*, double, and panpipes all occur. Double pipes are seen at Chichester and Winchester cathedrals and Cirencester. At Boston a siren plays the whistle-flute or *recorder* (8). At Winchester a sow is playing the double pipe; her young ones are intent on feeding, except one who lifts up

* Rev. F. W. Galpin; to whom I am indebted for the identification of many of the instruments illustrated.

his snout and sings or squeals (173). Music was common at banquets; so the behaviour of the little pigs may be emblematic of the behaviour of the majority of guests who go on feeding greedily and pay no attention to the music. But as this subject

Ely

occurs in the Bestiaries, it no doubt has a symbolical meaning. Usually the pipe and tabor were played together. "*Tabor*" is the French "tambour" and the English "drum." Of all instruments the pipe and tabor were held to be the vilest; their intro-

Cirencester

Winchester Cathedral

duction into good houses had ruined better music—the cithern, lute, and violin. One poet, Englished by Mr Wildridge, wishes

> "God send to that man who first made tabor,
> Which should please none, mischief for his labour;
> When tightly stretched and struck a hearty blow,
> For half a league you'll hear it as you go";

while an Anglo-Norman poet vows that these fellows with tabors made such a hurricane that one would think it was the devil's birthday; and that their heads ought to be beaten in with a club. Pipe and tabor are played by hares, bears, centaurs and clowns; there is an admirable example in the joust at Worcester; where, however, the pipe is replaced by a *clarion*, and a fool plays the *nakers* or double drums (159). At Westminster the tabor is being played by a naked devil (174). Pipe and tabor are played by a fool at Beverley, and by composite creatures at Ely and Chichester (13). The *bagpipes* were described by a French poet of the thirteenth or fourteenth century as only fit for peasants. In Beverley Minster a pig trough is seen in the foreground; the old pig plays the bagpipes and the young pigs dance to the music (174). At Ripon is a very spirited rendering of the same subject; at Richmond, Durham Castle and Westminster and Ciudad Rodrigo, Spain, the pig again is the

Westminster

Beverley Minster

performer; evidently the squeal of a pig was considered to be a faithful rendering of the note of the bagpipes. At Boston and Westminster a bear is the performer. On the other hand, on a corbel in Holy Trinity, Hull, the bagpipes are played by

an angel. The most biting satire on this objectionable instrument is that seen on the supporter of a misericord in Beverley Minster; where a dog, employed as bagpipes, is made to howl by an ape biting his tail (175). It is possible that something of the kind was to be seen at mediæval feasts. At any rate in processions in mediæval Belgium and up to the nineteenth century one of the most popular cars was one containing an organ surrounded by twenty cages, each containing a tom-cat, whose tail was tied to a key of the organ, so that he squealed when the key was struck.*

Beverley Minster 1520

Dancing had and has neither charm nor grace for common folk; dancing is only depicted to jeer at. In the opinion of the wood-carvers it was best left to pigs and bears and goats and monkeys. A Chichester carver expresses his views about dancing quite clearly by depicting the dancer as naked, except for a hood, and dancing with a beast. A supporter in Beverley Minster shews a man with a whip teaching a bear to dance; while the other supporter shews the successful result of his training, for the bear is dancing to the music of bagpipes played by an ape (104).

* Maeterlinck, 128.

CHAPTER XXII

MORAL LESSONS

EXCEPT at Lincoln and Worcester the wood-carvers shewed very little inclination to utilise their art in familiarising the laity with the story of the Bible or the lives of the saints. On the other hand they were quite ready and pleased to read the people moral lessons. And common folk being very stupid about the meaning of pictures and allegories, as they are still, the lesson had to be put in a plain, outspoken, graphic way, so that no one who saw the carving should fail to understand or should misunderstand its meaning. So the moral lessons are very clear indeed. Every vice is shewn in its natural ugliness. A spade is a spade on the misericords. Vice is not shewn alluring and attractive as in the modern "problem play," but as disgusting. The representations of drink, unchastity and the rest are offensive and were meant to be offensive. That is just the difference between the modern play and the mediæval misericord; one is immoral but not offensive; the other is offensive but not immoral. The sot is shewn what a beast he looks when he is drunk. In Beverley Minster the drunkard is shewn swilling beer from a flask, while a devil is at hand ready to carry him off (176). Attacks on chastity are shewn without any beating about the bush, whether the victim be a woman, as at Westminster, or a man, as at Windsor, where the subject occurs twice. At Ely the lady defends herself vigorously; she simultaneously bites her

Beverley Minster

assailant's thumb, pulls his hair and scratches his face (177). The manners of other ages are not those of ours; it does not follow that the morals of those ages were on the low level of the manners. In a beautiful Book of Hours of the fifteenth century, in the middle of pious pictures is a representation of February, in which a gentleman and lady are warming themselves at a fire; the latter has pulled her petticoats up above her knees;* no immoral suggestion, however, is intended; it is merely that manners have changed; we are squeamish about such things. Squeamishness, however, is quite a modern virtue. Our forefathers, gentlemen and ladies alike, right up to the eighteenth century and later, were coarse, indelicate and outspoken to an amazing degree; even in comparatively modern times no

Ely

scruples of delicacy deterred ladies of rank, *en chemise* in bed, from holding a levee of male friends in their bedroom. In mediæval days prince and pauper alike were inconceivably dirty and callous in their personal habits.† From this it follows that what calls a blush to the cheek of modesty nowadays did no such thing in mediæval days, which means that it did no harm; what is to us offensive and objectionable was nothing of the kind to the craftsmen who did the carving or the ecclesiastics who paid for it. No one nowadays can look without disgust at the treatment of some of the subjects in the misericords; our ancestors had strong stomachs, and being accustomed to see

* Illustrated in Champfleury, 26.
† See Enlart's *Architecture Civile et Militaire*, 95.

decent people enjoying such representations and talking quite frankly about them, they really were not a penny the worse. What was a familiar sight and a familiar topic to lord and lady, priest and clown, ceased to be harmful; it is indelicacy made novel and attractive that does mischief; we do not see the harm nowadays of seeing a young lady *decolletée* to the utmost and clasped by a sheath-like gown which reveals every curve of the person; it is quite conceivable that such a vision might have wrought serious mischief to a mediæval person unused to it. Habit and use are of the essence of manners, if not of morality; the sight of indecency could do no harm to people who were guilty every day of what we regard as indecency, and who talked about it quite freely without the slightest idea that there was anything in it contrary to good taste. Good taste means the taste in vogue for the time being, and no longer; it is futile to look at mediæval manners through modern spectacles.

It may be thought that we have here exaggerated the coarseness of byegone manners; plenty of examples could be adduced to prove that we have not done so as regards either noble lords and ladies, or clerics. As regards the former, the Chevalier de la Tour Landry wrote a book "*pour l'enseignement de ses filles*," to instruct his daughters, who were ladies of high rank; the first chapter of it is entitled "*Du moine qui fist fornication en l'eglise.*" If a gentleman could write in this frank way to his daughters, need we be astonished that no one was surprised that such scenes as these were represented by the carvers of the misericords with total absence of reserve? And the priests were as little to be shocked as the lords and ladies. Some of them indeed had a pretty wit of their own, and had their own jokes cut in wood, *e.g.*, Guy de Munois, abbé de Saint-Germain d'Auxerre from 1285 to 1309, had his seal engraved with a representation of a monkey in an abbé's dress; *Abbé de singe air main d'os serre.* And a bronze seal is in existence with an inscription *Le Scel De Levesque De La Cyté de Pinon; i.e.*, "the seal of the Bishop of Pinon"; on this seal is represented a cat with mitre and crosier;* a similar subject occurs on a misericord at Boston, Lincolnshire (163). Such instances as these are important; for they tell us that what modern writers are pleased to represent as bitter satires on the clergy are often no more than good-humoured jokes made by the clerics on themselves. It is by no means safe to assume that such subjects are invariably intended to be satires on the corruption and vices of mediæval Churchmen.

* Champfleury, 15.

Turning to our English misericords, the favourite subject of all is the happy home and its contrast. Where things go well, husband and wife work for the good of the house. At Worcester the husband has a spade, the wife is spinning. In Beverley the wife appears to be holding a distaff; the husband in one supporter is chopping firewood, in the other is blowing up a fire. In a delightful winter interior at Ripple the husband is warming his toes at the fire on which the iron pot boils; the wife on the other side of the pot is spinning, while the cat, perched on her chair, is washing its paws (118). More often the scene is one of the unhappiness brought on a household by an unthrifty, scolding, quarrelsome wife. On a misericord in Beverley Minster the happy and the unhappy home are con-

Carlisle

trasted; in the latter the wife has seized the husband by the hair and is giving him a sound drubbing; in the former the husband is chopping firewood, the wife is pounding corn in a mortar (89). At Carlisle the woman has seized the man by the beard, while she belabours him with a utensil held in her right hand (179). Sometimes the husband has brought a stick to beat the wife with, and there is a struggle for it, as at Ely. As a rule the carver chivalrously awards the victory to the wife; *e.g.*, at Sherborne, where the wife has obtained possession of the stick, and has got her husband down and is using it vigorously. Frequently plates and dishes are flying about; as on a misericord in Hereford cathedral where the cook or the wife is hurling a platter at a horrified man. In another the wife thrashes the

husband because he has brought home no game. But amusing as it may be to watch the shrieking virago of a wife, village opinion did not allow the sound doctrine of marital superiority to be infringed too far; that would be to set a bad example to the other wives. If the scold will not take a thrashing, either she must be gagged and bridled, as at Haie-aux-bonshommes, Belgium, Minster in Thanet, and Ludlow (180), or wheeled off to the nearest duckpond. At Leominster the ducking stool still remains in the church in a good state of repair. It is represented on a misericord in Durham Castle chapel.* Next to drink, gambling breaks up most homes. At Gloucester two men seem to be gambling with money or counters on the ground. At Windsor a man and a woman are quarrelling over backgammon or tric-

Ludlow

trac. At Ely, in the centre of the misericord, two men are gambling; in the right supporter a man holds a goblet in his right hand and a big pitcher in his left; in the left supporter is seen the wife with a hive of honey upset; emblematic of the fact that all her savings have gone in drink and gambling (181). Nor does avarice escape. In Beverley Minster a man is counting the coins in his treasure chest; but down below lurks a devil on the point of seizing it and him. Avarice, bad enough in a layman, was yet worse in a religious person. At Westminster one misericord shews a devil seizing a monk holding a bag from which the coins are dropping; among them are a gold

* This, however, may represent simply the wife having a pleasant ride and the husband doing all the work.

Ely

angel and halfpennies of the time of Henry VIII. In the other a devil is carrying off the terror-stricken monk on his back, holding the empty bag in his hand; another devil beating a drum leads the way to hell; a woman surveys the awful scene with horror. Both in France and Flanders the ape is the symbol of avarice or of the usurer; in France the same word, *magot*, means either "an ape" or "a hoard"; in Flanders "aap" means either "an ape" or "a treasure." At Beverley St Mary is a strange misericord in which an ape offers a well-filled bag to an ecclesiastic who has a coin in his hand (181). Greatest of all crimes in the eyes of a villager is to cheat a poor man

Beverley St Mary

of his beer. At Ludlow the artist takes exceptional pains in portraying the last end of the cheating alewife. She is being haled off to hell fire by a devil with one of her false measures in her hand, and the carver bestows exceptional beauty on her person, in order to punish her the more by the exposure of it; one devil is reading aloud from a scroll the long list of her cheats, while another favours him with a screed on the bagpipes by way of accompaniment (148). Stealing butter and cream was a cardinal crime with a farmer's wife, that no decent creature would be guilty of; so the crime and its consequences are all referred to a monkey in one of the stalls in Lincoln Minster. Of animals the goat was the symbol of lechery and sensuality; and with it the hare, because of its habit of superfetation; the

Beverley St Mary

two frequently occur together. The lecherous man is described as follows by Spenser in the *Faery Queene:*

"And next to him rode lustful *Lechery*
Upon a bearded goat, whose rugged hair
And wolly eyes (the sign of jealousy)
Was like the person self whom he did bear,
Who rough and black and filthy did appear:
Unseemly man to please fair ladies' eye;
Yet he of ladies oft was loved dear,
When fairer faces were bid standen by.
O who does know the bent of women's fantasy?"

On a misericord at Beverley St Mary a naked man bestrides a goat, with a hare under his arm; on the left is David or Samson throttling a lion; between them is a king with crown

and sceptre (182). But another feature in these representations of lechery is not so easy to explain, viz., that the lecherous man or woman is enveloped in a net. In Beverley St Mary the net is faintly seen on the chest and legs of the rider of the goat; it is very clear at Worcester (183), where the rider is a woman; on a corbel of Auxerre cathedral and at Stratford-on-Avon a naked woman is mounted on a goat. On a misericord in Norwich cathedral a man in a net, holding a hare in his left hand, rides on a stag. In the quire of York Minster a man in a net bestrides a goose.* In cases where the rider is a woman, a remarkable explanation is offered by Dr Oscar Clark from an ancient Norse folk-tale, of which there are several different versions:

"When King Frey, or, according to other accounts, a King Sigtrud, far

Worcester

back in the times of heathenism, ruled in the North, the population, during a long peace, had so greatly increased that one year on the coming of winter the crops of the preceding autumn were already consumed. The king therefore summoned all the commonalty to an assembly for the purpose of finding a remedy for the impending evil, when it was decreed that all the old, the sickly, the deformed, and the idle should be slain and offered to Odin. When one of the king's councillors, named Siustin, returned from the assembly to his dwelling in Uppland, his daughter Disa inquired of him what had there taken place, and as she was in all respects wise and judicious, he recounted to her what had been resolved on. On hearing it, she said she could have given better counsel, and wondered that among so many men there was found so little wisdom. These words reached at length the ears of the king, who was angry at her boldness and conceit,

* Illustrated in *Norwich and Norfolk Antiq. Proceedings*, ii. 251; and Browne's *York Minster*, ii. 149.

and declared he would soon put her to her wit's end. He promised to take her to his counsel, but on condition that she should come to him not on foot nor on horseback, not driving nor sailing, not clad nor unclad, not in a year nor a month, not by day nor by night, not in the moon's increase nor wane. Disa, in her perplexity at this order, prayed to the goddess Frigg for counsel, and then went to the king in the following manner. She harnessed two young men to a sledge, by the side of which she caused a goat to be led; she held one leg in the sledge and placed the other on the goat, and was herself clad in a net. Thus she came to the king neither walking nor riding, nor driving, nor sailing, neither clad nor unclad. She came neither in a current year nor month, but on the third day before Yule, one of the days of the solstice, which were not reckoned as belonging to the year itself, but as a complement, and in like manner might be said not to belong to any month. She came neither in the increase nor in the wane, but just at the full moon; neither by day nor by night, but in the twilight. The king wondered at such sagacity, ordered her to be brought before him, and found so great delight in her conversation, beauty, and understanding, that he made her his queen." *

Other variants of the same story are quoted by Mr D. S. Maccoll.† In one, to be found in J. F. Campbell's *Popular Tales of the West Highlands*, Grania falls in love with Diarmaid, who said, "I would not take thee on thy feet, and I would not take thee on a horse, and I would not take thee without, and I would not take thee within." But on a day she came, and was between the two sides of a door, on a buck-goat. "Now," said she, "I am not without and I am not within; I am not on a foot, and I am not on a horse; and thou must go with me," she said. Again, in a Transylvanian tale, the king promises to marry the beggar maid if she will come to him neither driving nor walking nor riding, neither dressed nor naked, neither out of the road nor in the road, and she must bring him something that is a gift and no gift. She put two wasps between two plates, strips, and throws over herself a fishing net, puts her goat into a rut in the road, and with one foot on the goat's back and the other stepping along the rut, made her way to the king. Then she lifted up one of the plates and the wasps flew away; so that she had brought a gift and no gift. It will be noted that on the Worcester misericord (183), precisely as in the Transylvanian story, the rider on the goat has one foot on the ground. It is possible that the subject ultimately derives from Greek mythology; for at Elis there was a statue of Artemis Pandemos, in which she was represented as a naked woman riding on a goat.

* Thorpe's *Northern Mythology*, i. 209.
† *Burlington Magazine*, viii. 80.

CHAPTER XXIII

NURSERY RHYMES AND WISE SAWS

THEN, as now, the philosopher of the tavern bench got much of his reputation from the stock of "wise saws" that he retailed. Some of them have more than a tavern vogue; the nursery rhyme is still current which tells us

> "Hey diddle diddle! the cat and the fiddle,
> The cow jumped over the moon";

though we have lost the key to the meaning of it. On the

Whalley

pews at Fawsley, Northants, both the cat and the fiddle and the cow jumping over the moon are represented; at Hereford a cat is playing a fiddle (172). In Beverley Minster a fat cat is tormenting two mice, while on a supporter she plays the fiddle and her kittens dance to the music (106). The "Cat and Fiddle" is still a well-known inn sign. Elsewhere an ape may be seen shaving a pig; and a snail creeping up a hill, driven by a monk. At Whalley (185) and Beverley Minster (164) the

misericord depicts the shoeing of the goose; in the latter the shoe and the nails in it are very distinct. In the former the whole blacksmith's shop is shewn. The goose is in the frame within which kicking horses were fastened by a rope to a post when they were to be shod. The blacksmith is shewn with uplifted hammer; at the back are the fireplace, chimney and big bellows, the anvil and a completed shoe. The shoeing of the goose is also carved on one of the capitals in the quire of York Minster.* It was evidently a very ancient saying; Rabelais has it; of Gargantua he says, "He would flay the fox; *he shod the geese;* and tickled himself to make himself laugh." At Whalley the explanation is given in blackletter below:

"Whoso melles of" (meddles with) "wat men dos
Let hym cum hier and sho the ghos."

The meaning then is that if a man, instead of attending to his own business which he understands, tries his hand at other people's business which he does not understand, he will make a failure of it. At Walcourt, Belgium, a blacksmith is nailing a shoe on the webbed foot of a goose taller than himself which is fastened in a shoeing-frame.†

Rouen Cathedral

Another misericord at Whalley tells us to think much and say little:

"Pensez molt e p'lez poy";

an admirable maxim, but what has it to do with the wodehouse and damsel carved above? Abbot Eccles put up stalls in the Abbey church in 1435, and these stalls in the parish church may have come from the Abbey. At Rouen the carver wished to illustrate the saying about casting pearls before swine, and as marguerite is the term for the flower as well as for the pearl, he shews an old woman emptying a basket of marguerite blooms before her two pigs (186). In the course of time the signification of the name of the flower was forgotten, and the marguerites were imagined to be roses and were described and sculptured as such. Thus the Latin proverb "*margaritas* ante porcos" becomes in Flemish "*Rosen* voor de verkens"; and on misericords at Kempen and Dordrecht and on old broadsheets men are shewn throwing to the pigs baskets containing sprays of roses. Another widespread saying was that of "belling the cat." On a misericord at Kempen four rats have brought a bell on a

* Browne's *York Minster*, ii. plate 148.
† Illustrated in Maeterlinck, 177.

string (the bell resembles a bicycle bell) and the cat is waiting for them to try to put it on. The same saying "Hy hanget de cat de bel aen" appears on Flemish broadsides, on a sculpture at Courtrai and a painting at Haarlem. Another English saying appears in Flemish as "Men kan met het hoofd geen muuren breken"; *i.e.*, "One can't break a wall with one's head." On misericords at Hoogstraeten and St Nicholas, Amsterdam, one man is rushing head first at a wall, another is holding his head in both hands, and groaning with pain.* The result of indecision is shewn on misericords at Rouen and Amsterdam by a man falling between two stools. The English proverb "Much cry and little wool" appears in Flemish as "Veel geschreeuw voor weinig wol" and is represented on a stall at Kempen by a man shearing a squealing pig; sometimes it is an ape that shears the pig. The Flemings have a complementary proverb, "Veel wol en weinig geschreeuw"; *i.e.*, "Much wool and little cry"; this is represented by a man shearing a sheep. An equivalent to "shearing the pig" was "thrashing eggs with a flail"; in both it is a waste of labour; this subject appears on misericords in Beverley Minster and Kempen, Germany. Another widespread belief was that "a woman, an ass, and a walnut tree, the more you beat them, the better they be"; or in German "Ein gütes Weib musst geprüghelt werden," *i.e.*, "A good wife needs beating." This subject is very frequent indeed on the misericords; *e.g.*, at Hoogstraeten, Holland. "Birds of a feather flock together" appears more neatly in French, "Qui se ressemble s'assemble"; on a misericord in the cathedral of Placentia, Spain, this is represented by a woman fondling a pig.

* Illustrated in Maeterlinck, 220, 283.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A TOPSY TURVY WORLD

THE carvers also desired to shew that they were witty as well as wise. Their wit was that of the tavern; simple, direct and obvious must the jest be that is to set the taproom in a roar; and it is better appreciated if it is not altogether new.

Hereford Cathedral

Antiquity did not stale the traditional joke; it improved with age, when the disagreeable element of surprise had been rubbed off. Like the modern American joke, it was machine-made; and when in the course of two or three generations it had sunk in, it lasted for ever. One of the simplest artifices was that of Inversion. It was thought a huge joke to present a world in which all the ordinary relations of life were inverted. Whole collections of such pleasant jests were got together and published. So late as 1790, and very likely later, books were to be bought entitled *The World turned upside down.* One of these chap books represents two men drawing the plough, which is guided by an ox. A second represents a tournament

in which the horses are armed and ride down the men. Another shews the ox killing the butcher. In others birds are netting men; the horse is turned groom and is currying the rider; and the fish are catching the anglers.* Quite a simple inversion shewn on the misericords is a man riding a horse with his face to the tail; as at Bristol, Hereford cathedral (188), All Saints', Hereford, and Wells. There was an ancient saying about the time when an abbot

> "Bestriding an ass should ride through the land
> With the tail instead of the reins in his hand."

The old saying of "putting the cart before the horse" is illustrated in Beverley Minster (189). The whole relation of the weak and strong is inverted; the epic of *Reynard the Fox* is a tale of the

Beverley Minster

successful struggle of the weak little fox with the bear, the wolf, the lion and other big brutes. To a similar inversion *Brer Rabbit* owes much of its popularity in modern days. The mediæval carver shews great delight in upsetting the relations between the weaker and the stronger sex; instead of the man thrashing the woman, the tables are turned, and it is he who constantly gets the worst of it. At Westminster such a scene is shewn on two adjoining misericords; in the first a woman has knocked a man down and is whacking him with a distaff; in the next he suffers the intensified indignity of being made to kneel while she administers a thrashing with a birch. In Picardy one day a year

* Wright's *Caricature*, 91.

Ely

was solemnly set apart, Easter Tuesday, in which the wives whipped their husbands.* Another rich joke was to make the husband do the housework. At Ely, instead of the husband sitting idle while the wife does the work, it is the wife who does the looking on, while the husband, sitting among jugs and flagons, pounds corn in a mortar (190). At Beverley Minster is a husband wheeling his wife in a barrow (one handle and half the wheel are broken off), while she pulls his ear to make him go faster (190). The French have a proverb, "Plaisir pour la femme, peine pour le mari." This scene occurs also on miseri-

* Witkowski, *L'art profane*, 413.

Beverley Minster

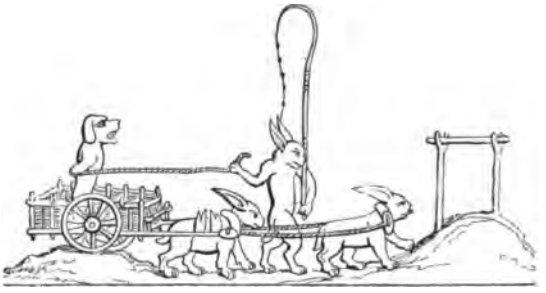
cords at Ripon, Durham Castle chapel, and Hoogstraeten, Belgium. On misericords in Rouen cathedral and Presle, France, and Hoogstraeten, Belgium, husband and wife are struggling for the breeches; on a Flemish broadsheet seven women are fighting for one man's breeches; "*Hier vechten seven vrouwen om een mans broeck*"; the poor wretch is on the ground, holding desperately to the breeches with both hands, while the ladies belabour him with chairs, distaffs, scourges and kitchen utensils. In an engraving by the Flemish artist, Van Mecken, dated 1480, the lady is putting on the breeches, while the man is trying to wind a ball of yarn on a frame, and the wife is smiting him with her distaff (191). Precisely the same representation occurs at Hoogstraeten, Belgium. As with the sexes, so with the animals: the weaker are given victory over the strong. On a misericord in Beverley Minster a rabbit has put a bit in the mouth of a fox and rides on it with the reins in its mouth;

Van Mecken

Sherborne

in another a monkey rides on a cat, and combs its back with a large comb. At Westminster a cock rides a fox; at Manchester a fox rides a hound. At Worcester a hare rides a hound (92); this is seen also in a thirteenth century tile from Derby Priory, where the hare blows a horn as he rides. At Diest,

Belgium, a dog is wheeled in a barrow by his master, a professional fool. The climax is reached in a woodcut in the chap book quoted above, where a rabbit is seen turning a spit on which a man is roasting. This is the scene represented on a misericord at Manchester. It is the custom still in some old-fashioned places, *e.g.*, Stratford-on-Avon, at the fair or feast to roast oxen whole in the street; a pole is passed through them from head to foot, and they are kept turning over a fire by means of a windlass. On the misericord, however, it is a spitted huntsman with a bugle who is grilling over the fire, while a hare examines a row of cooking pots, out of one of which he draws boiled dog's head. The revenge of the weaker on the stronger



British Museum MS.

animals is equally complete. The geese, whom he has harried so often, turn the tables on Reynard at Sherborne; he is making an edifying end, attended by two chaplains. At Malvern three mice hang a large, fat cat (191). A charming illumination in a manuscript shews the dog with hands bound behind being carted to Tyburn by hares; he is making his dying speech (192). Another time-honoured joke was to shew a man riding any sort of beast except a horse; *e.g.*, at Beverley Minster, where he rides a pig, steering it by the tail. As we have seen, bears were taught to dance and wrestle and box, and apes to mimic almost every action of humanity; it was only one step further in inversion to make all other kinds of beasts play human parts.

CHAPTER XXV

HERALDIC CARVINGS AND INSCRIPTIONS

IN many cases a stall was presented by an individual donor. Occasionally it may be that his portrait is carved below. At Higham Ferrers the carving may depict the face of Archbishop Chicheley ; he wears the " mitra preciosa " : the supporters seem to be ecclesiastical or academic dignitaries (218). In Beverley Minster there are inscribed the heraldic devices and

Beverley Minster

names of the Precentor, Chancellor and Treasurer, who were by statute respectively first, second and third dignitaries in the chapter. As usual, the pictorial pun or canting heraldry is common. The precentor of Beverley was ordered by Archbishop Arundel to sit in the south row of stalls, the ninth from the west; and the treasurer in the same position on the north side. The centrepiece of the precentor's stall consists of a shield, with a griffin on either side as supporter ; quarterly in the 1st and 4th compartments are three billets and three balls, and in the 2nd and 3rd a chevron between three mullets. The inscription is

ARMA MAGISTRI THOME DONYNGTO', P'CENTORIS HUIS ECCLIE; "the arms of Master Thomas Donington, Precentor of this church." On the dexter supporter is a pelican in her piety; and on the right a rebus; viz., a *Doe on a Tun* (193). The precentor at Beverley was a dignitary by common law, while the chancellor and treasurer were only so by custom. At Beverley he was a priest, but was Rector Chori. His duty was to provide for and conduct the musical part of the services, and to provide service books and writing materials.* The duty of the chancellor, according to Dugdale, was to hear the lessons and lectures read in the church by himself or his vicar; to correct the reader when he reads amiss; to inspect schools; to hear causes; to affix the common seal; to write and despatch letters of the chapter; to keep the books; to take care there be frequent preachings, both in the church and out of it, and to assign the office of preaching to whom he pleases. The chancellor's stall was the first from the west on the south side. On the misericord is more canting heraldry; the inscription is WILLIM WYGHT TEMPORE CANCELLARIUS HUIUS ECCLECIE; *i.e.*, "William White, temporary chancellor of this church"; and the centrepiece consists of a shield containing three *weights;* the dexter supporter is a man carrying two *weights;* the sinister is a man carrying a pair of scales with two *weights* (195). The pendant of the stall canopy above his head also consists of three *weights* fastened to a ring. The fourth stall from the west on the south side is that of the Canon and Prebendary of St Andrew's altar; the centrepiece consists of a shield with three *weights*, as in the first stall, but without inscription; in the supporters also men are lifting *weights;* probably Chancellor Wyght or White presented this stall also (195). The treasurer at Beverley was the officer usually called sacrist; he was responsible for the custody of the wealth of the chapter; the relics, plate, books, vestments, furniture and ornaments; there is an item of a payment in 1532 of 12d. to "William *Taytt*, sacrist of the church aforesaid, for the altar of St James for celebrating mass there in the morning, at 12d. yearly." The centrepiece of the misericord is a shield supported by a hawk and a hound; on a fess are the rays of the sun between three birds; the sun rays are repeated on the pendants on the back of the canopy, with the word TATE. The dexter supporter is a dove or partridge; the sinister a hawk; the inscription is ARMA WILHELMI TAIT DOCTORIS THESAURARII HUIUS ECCLIE 1520, *i.e.*, "the arms of Dr William Tate, treasurer of this church." This fixes the date of the misericords

* Wildridge, 22.

Beverley Minster

Beverley Minster

Beverley Minster

in the minster. The go-as-you-please spelling of the treasurer's name is worth notice. The first stall from the west on the north side is that of John Sperke. There is an entry in 1532 of £15. 11s. 1d., paid "upon Robert Hogeson, executor of the testament of John Sparke, late receiver-general." John Sperke or Sparke was what was called at Westminster "Custos Operis" or Warden of the Fabric; at Beverley he is styled "Clerk of the Works"; his function was to see that the Minster was kept in proper repair and to superintend and find money for any building that was going on. The centrepiece is a hawking scene. On the dexter supporter is a dog gnawing a bone, as at Christchurch (107); on the sinister supporter is a cock. The inscription is JOHANNES SPERKE CLERICUS FABRICI (196).

Beverley Minster

Another misericord seems to be a joint present of three canons, but the meaning is not clear. The centrepiece is a crowing cock; this may well mean *Wake;* the two cocks on a barrel or tun may be Wake-ing-ton, or *Walkington;* or they may be Cock-ton or *Cockington;* the bird with the label CHOT may be *Wagshot* or *Cockshot.*

In many cases the heraldry is merely that of the reigning sovereign or dynasty; *e.g.*, a misericord at Beverley Minster carved in 1520 with nothing but roses; at Windsor a misericord carved with the rose *en soleil*, badge of the Yorkists; the antelope, chained and collared, seen at Beverley (193) was also a favourite badge of Henry V. and the House of Lancaster. When the emblem is that of a private person, it may be sometimes that he was the donor of the stall. At Corston, Somer-

Exeter

Exeter

Tansor

Ely

York

Hereford All Saints'.

set, a misericord has a carving of a mermaid holding a comb in one hand and in the other a bag of gold; these are the arms of the Brittons, Lords of the Manor of Corston. At Lynn St Margaret's the scallop shells shew that the misericord was presented by one of the Scales family (17). At Worle are the beautifully carved initials of Prior Richard Spryng (215). At Exeter the two fish may be the gift of a man called Pike or Luce; or the misericord may have been presented by the Fishmongers' Guild (197); and in the same way the misericord with the two gloved hands carved below may have been the gift of the Glovers' Guild (197). At Tansor is a misericord with Prince of Wales' feathers, a fetter lock and a rose (197).

LEDGE SUPPORTERS.

Frequently there is no esoteric meaning whatever in the carving; the design consisting simply of a figure arranged to support the ledge of the seat. An elaborate example is that of the pair of posture-makers at Ely (198), and the contortionist at All Saints', Hereford (198). At York Minster (198), on one of the only two original misericords saved from the fire, the ledge is propped up by head and hands.

CHAPTER XXVI

FOLIAGE AND FIGURE SUBJECTS

THE history of foliage and figure sculpture runs very nearly parallel in wood and stone. In figure sculpture we started magnificently with the statues which still glorify the west front of Wells cathedral. For some reason or other this great western school of figure sculpture died out and left no successors. With comparatively few exceptions the statues—other than effigies—which were produced after the middle of the thirteenth century fell away from the high beginnings of the art, which not only decayed but sometimes reached an abyss of positive artistic degradation; nothing can well be worse, for example, than the row of kings above the western doorway of Lincoln Minster. In foliage also the earliest sculptors won to the highest artistic levels. No foliated capitals were ever produced at any later period to excel those of Wells nave and transept. Nevertheless fine design and execution of foliated ornament long lingered in stone; *e.g.*, in the naturalistic capitals of Lichfield nave and Southwell Chapter house, in the bulbous foliage of the capitals of Selby quire and Patrington church. But after the fourteenth century foliated ornament became to a very large extent standardised, and after that date possesses little of freshness, originality, or interest. Very similar was the case with the carvers of the misericords. Their foliated work was far and away superior to their figure sculpture; the difference indeed on one and the same misericord is sometimes almost ridiculous. It seems incredible that the same man who carved the figure of St Luke and the oxen at Cockington can also have been the creator of the foliated supporters, charming alike in design and execution (149). Knowing then his weakness in figure sculpture, and his superiority in foliated ornament, it is not unnatural that in a large number of the misericords he omits the former altogether and confines himself to leaf and floral subjects; a special favourite being the rose, partly because of its heraldic import, still more because of its decorative facilities. But, unfortunately for himself, the wood-carver had not the same

free hand as his brother craftsman. The latter was not asked—or very seldom—to design and execute a capital composed of sculptured figures. But of the craftsman in stained glass and the wood-carver alike a large amount of figure work was expected. With both the conditions were mostly unfavourable. The former, in all the early glass, and indeed in much of the later glass also, *e.g.*, in the windows of Malvern Priory and the York parish churches, was expected to compress a complicated figure scene within the scanty limits of a medallion or a small panel. The latter was still more straitly confined; it was impossible for him to outpass the limits of the misericord. And even in this he was in nine cases out of ten confined to the narrow boundaries of the centrepiece and its two small supporters; he was rarely allowed, as at Gloucester, to occupy the whole space with his subject. His work therefore had to be done on a scale so minute that his design was seriously curtailed in freedom and breadth. But even if he had had more space and scope, it may be doubted if he would have obtained any large measure of success; certainly his brother craftsman in stone, when commissioned to execute statues life-size, was rarely to be congratulated. Neither the one nor the other was capable of delineating pure form.

Knowing this they sought in compensation to concentrate the attention not on the individual figures or on arrangements of drapery or on the composition of the whole, but simply on the story that was being told. This they did in two ways. In the first place the chief persons or animals who were to appear were standardised. This had been done long ago in the Eastern Church in Byzantine manuals of painting. Similar conventions were in vogue in the Western Church. Thus St Paul was represented as tall, bald, with long beard and sword; given this group of characteristics, he could not be mistaken for St Peter or any one else. So it was with the beasts; omit the tail, or make it very short, and a beast so badly drawn that it might equally well have passed for a lion, wolf or ass, was held to be a bear. Put a ruff round the neck of another beast, and every one knew it meant "lion." With such standardised characters story telling was much facilitated to the wood-carver. And not unnaturally, he rather tended to emphasise and exaggerate the characteristics of the brute and human "dramatis personæ"; it made the scene all the more intelligible. So the goose is very web-footed indeed; the bristling spine of the boar stands up like a board (100); the fox has a brush as big as himself; the cock has a towering comb. Again, just as a child tries to draw the human figure correctly, and, failing, then sets to work on the much easier task of

drawing caricatures of it, finding therein genuine interest and enjoyment, so the wood-carver was easily tempted to leave the difficult delineation of the human form in its normal grace of posture and attitude, and to draw it by preference when in an abnormal and contorted position. Hence the numerous representations of contortionists and posture-makers. From this the step was short to invent imaginary beings contorted and grotesque in the composition of their members or in their attitudes. Hence the delight in grotesque monsters—not only the almost classical dragons and griffins and wyverns, but the purely imaginary beasties such as are seen on the misericords of All Saints', Hereford (66), and St Nicholas, Lynn (68).

Even when he confined himself to vegetative form, the wood-carver was subjected again to serious limitations. He might wish to delineate a forest or at any rate a tree. The space was too small for a whole forest; so he had to be satisfied with representing one or two trees, which were to be taken to mean "forest" (50). In the same way two or three pillars and arches, *e.g.*, at Ely (98), were taken to mean "church," on the principle on which the Bœotian brought to the auction room a brick as a specimen of the house he had for sale. Nor again, if he confined himself to a single tree, were his difficulties at an end. For it was essential that the subject should cover the space; and a tree, if its spreading head be shewn, leaves much blank space on either side of the trunk. Therefore for the most part he avoids them altogether. Being thus out of practice in drawing trees, if he does attempt them, the results are the more disastrous; *e.g.*, at Bristol (72) and Beverley St Mary's (61) and in a really ambitious attempt at Chester (37). The wretched nature of this work only emphasises all the more the veritable triumphs which he won in the delineation of leaf and bloom.

The first period of his work in foliated ornament is seen early in the thirteenth century, when the sculptor at Wells and Lincoln had produced for him patterns of foliated work in stone. The ornament is precisely similar to the scroll work which may be seen in the spandrels of arches at Lincoln, Stone church, Westminster and elsewhere; it is conventional foliage of trefoiled or cinquefoiled leafage; *e.g.*, at Hemingborough, Yorkshire (203), and Christchurch, Hants (203), in the second of which writhing dragons are introduced (203).

By the middle of the century the design is still more refined; the veins of the leaves are raised, and the little blobs on them are represented also; a fine sequence of this work will be seen on comparing the work at Christchurch with that at Exeter (205); all the Exeter work is of the period 1255-1269. Except at

Hemingborough

Christchurch

Christchurch

Exeter no set of misericords of this period remains. At times, however, an isolated example occurs amid a set of later design, *e.g.*, at Westminster. In such cases it is likely that there originally existed a complete set of foliated misericords, and that they were deliberately destroyed in later days in order that they might be replaced by misericords with figure subjects.

In the last years of the thirteenth century and a little later, conventional was replaced by naturalistic foliage, both in stone and wood. Of the latter there are delightful examples in the stalls of Chichester cathedral (206) and Winchester cathedral. But by far the finest set is that at Wells, where all the supporters consist of bosses of foliage, carved with great truthfulness to nature, and including specimens of the oak, the maple, the vine, the rose, the marsh mallow, the ivy, the beech and other well-known plants and trees (107, 108). Some, however, have conventional foliage, thoroughly thirteenth century in type. Where such is the case, *e.g.*, at Exeter also, it has sometimes been assumed that the two designs are of different date. This does not always follow. Since the world began there have ever been young men and old men, progressives and retrogressives; the latter would be sure here and there to repeat time-hallowed, if out-of-date, design, if only to save thought.

Photographic copying of natural leaves, clever as it was, soon wearied; and in the first half of the fourteenth century was replaced by the delineation of leaves of bulbous form. The merit of the new work was that it abounded in the compound ogee curve which now ran riot all over the building; which, beginning with the crockets, was the keynote of foliated design, moldings, canopies, and window tracery alike. Nowhere is it seen in greater profusion than at Ely, both in stone and wood; almost every misericord has specimens of it; typical examples are illustrated on pages 170, 198; and a different design, but still with the swelling ogee curve, is seen on the supporters in Hereford cathedral (172, 188).

In the latter half of the fourteenth century the ogee design becomes at once more complex, and is full of variety and interest. At Worcester the swineherd scene has foliage of simple type (95) but it is greatly enriched in most instances (143, 183). From these last the transition is short to the Sherborne examples. But the next two examples from Sherborne go on to a fresh line of design (90, 146); and this again is deserted for a charming vine pattern (152). At All Saints', Hereford, the three rose designs are delightfully fresh and vigorous (65, 198).

Exeter

Exeter

Exeter

In the fifteenth century foliated ornament went very largely out of vogue. In most parts of England, excepting Somerset and Devon, the foliated capital went out of use, supplanted by its rival, the molded capital. For the most part foliage was conventionalised once more and standardised, the favourite form being a square or lozenge-shaped flower, with or without stalks. This could be executed with few strokes of the gouge and was produced in thousands. In its normal and simplest form it is seen at Worle (117), Beverley St Mary (15) Ludlow (90), Carlisle (179); and with rather more elaboration at Cartmel (51). Nevertheless, here and there, something more interesting was produced, survivals more or less of fourteenth century design. Roses are seen at St

Chichester

Margaret's, Lynn (17), Cartmel (7), and Wellingborough (95); and at Windsor the Yorkist badge, the *rose en soleil.* In the chapel of Winchester College is a charming example of convolvulus leaves, bloom and tendrils.

In the first half of the sixteenth century much of the foliage is conventional and uninteresting; nevertheless there is a revulsion at times to naturalistic forms; and it is noticeable that when they are adopted, the carvers do not revert to simple and easy leafage like the oak and vine, but frequently go out of their way to find blooms and seed vessels of highly complicated character, which will the more do credit to their skill. In this department of foliated ornament the Ripon carvers easily bear off the bell; the examples shewn (9, 140) are unequalled elsewhere, except perhaps in some pretty

columbines at Manchester. In Beverley Minster are copies, more or less clumsy, of the Ripon design (100, 155). At Westminster entirely new motifs are essayed (11).

In Christchurch, Hants, the influence of the reversion to the Classical design of the Renaissance is manifest; all the stalls of 1509-1520 have scrolls of acanthus of almost identical design (107). At King's College, Cambridge, the misericords, like the magnificent stalls, are of Early Renaissance character; they are *c.* 1534; and are of two different designs; the more important with very fine Renaissance scroll work; the rest much more simple.

To the seventeenth century belong the stalls of Wimborne and Durham cathedral. The former, with the stalls, have been for the most part "restored" away; among those that remain are scrolls of acanthus; their date is 1608. Misericords of Classical type remain also in the chapel of Lincoln College, Oxford, consecrated in 1631. Those at Durham were put up by the munificent Bishop Cosin between 1660 and 1672; they also are without supporters; they replace those destroyed by the Scotch prisoners.

PART III

CHAPTER XXVII

ON THE USE OF MISERICORDS—NOMENCLATURE

IN the primitive churches the chief posture permissible during the services was that of standing; the faithful stood as a rule during the whole service; if at prayer, usually they stood with hands uplifted, as may be seen in the numerous paintings of the "Orante" in the Roman catacombs. At a later period it became more usual to kneel at prayer; still, however, it was forbidden to sit in church. Cases occurred, *e.g.*, at Besançon, where Peter Damian, in the eleventh century, condemned the canons for sitting in church; evidently such a practice was regarded as exceptional and reprehensible. But where the monks or canons were weak or old, some relaxation of the severity of the rule was inevitable. The first step in the direction of mitigation was to provide the weak with crutches, which, placed under the armpit, afforded some support. These "leaning staffs" or "reclinatoria" are mentioned in the Customary of Lincoln Minster; they are still in use in some Greek churches. Amalarius, who took a leading part in the organisation of the cathedrals, required the leaning crutch to be laid aside during the reading of the Gospel. Others, like St Benedict, more conservative of ancient usage, refused to allow "reclinatoria" to be used at all.* A further and later indulgence or "misericordia" ("act of mercy") was to construct the seats of the stalls with pivots and hinges so that they could be turned up like the seats of the stalls in a modern theatre; and to provide the underside of the seat with a small projecting ledge affording a little support behind to a person standing in the stall. Seats so

* Walcott, *Sacred Archæology*, 548.

constructed are termed *misericords, i.e.*, "indulgence seats." By the use of these misericords the monks and canons were able to comply with the ancient discipline where it enjoined a standing position, while at the same time obtaining a little support and change of posture. An early mention of misericords occurs in Peter of Cluny, A.D. 1121, when he speaks of "scabella sedibus inhaerentia"; about the same time the term "misericord" is employed at the convent of Hirsaugh, in Germany; the stalls being termed "sedilia." We have no existing misericords so early in England; of those which survive none are earlier than the thirteenth century. Ducange in his dictionary says that the term *misericordia* is equivalent to the French "misericordes" or "patiences," and that it is applied to the "sellulae erectis formarum subselliis appositae, quibus stantibus senibus vel infirmis per misericordiam insidere conceditur, dum alii stant"; *i.e.*, "when the seats (*subsellia*) of the stalls (*formae*) are turned up, there are little ledges, and during parts of the service where a standing position is required, the aged and infirm are allowed to sit on these ledges by way of indulgence or mercy (*misericordia*)." For this use of the term *misericordia* he quotes the following: "In ecclesia quamdiu scilla pulsatur ante Nocturnos, super misericordiam sedilis sui, si opus habet, quiescit"; *i.e.*, "as long as the bell is being rung before Nocturns, he remains still on the misericord of his stall" (*sedile*).* In the Greek church near London Wall, every seat was of misericord construction. During those parts of the service (and they are very frequent) where the rubrics require a standing position, the worshipper raises the stall to support the person, which it does in a very sufficient manner.† Sometimes even with the aid of the misericords it was found impossible to stand during the long and numerous services, and a dispensation had to be granted. Thus at Westminster the "*sanguinati*," those who had recently had their blood let, did not proceed to the stalls for service, but to St Benedict's chapel, where seats were provided for them. Such relaxations of discipline were really necessary in the mediæval Church. The ancient offices to be said daily were seven; *Lauds*, *Prime*, *Tierce*, *Sext*, *Nones*, *Vespers* and *Compline:* in addition to which there was *Matins* at or soon after midnight; and every day there was *High Mass*, at which the whole com-

* It is plain from this passage and others that the term *sedilia* was originally applied to the stalls. What we now call *sedilia*, viz., the seats of the celebrant, deacon and subdeacon on the south side of the sanctuary, were styled *presbytery*. The term "*forma*" is found also for a misericord, and "*formula*" either for the kneeling board or for the elbow rest.

† *Notes and Queries*, i. v. 39.

munity was present; moreover, every priest other than the celebrant had himself to say a private mass, besides occasionally taking part in additional masses for benefactors of the convent and others. At each of the seven offices four psalms, besides canticles and hymns, were recited; $4 \times 7 = 28$ psalms $+ 7$ canticles $+ 7$ hymns $= 42$ periods at which it was necessary to stand daily, besides endless verses and responses, in addition to Matins and Mass.* In the end, however, a further relaxation took place; it was allowed to turn down the seats of the stalls and to sit on them; *e.g.*, at the Epistle and Gradual at Mass and the Response at Vespers.

During the nineteenth century the custom has grown up of styling these seats *misereres;* this term has no ancient authority and should be discarded.†

* Letts, *Manchester Misericords.*

† It seems to occur first in 1809 in Bishop Milner's *History of Winchester*, ii. 37.

CHAPTER XXVIII

DESIGN OF THE SEATS

IN examining a series of misericords it is of great importance to draw the seat as seen in plan. This seems hitherto to have escaped notice; yet it is the simplest and easiest test of the chronology of the work, *e.g.*, if the seats of the misericords at Christchurch, Hants, are inspected, it will be found that they are of three different shapes; and the series is seen at once to be partly of the thirteenth, partly of the fifteenth, and partly of the sixteenth century. In similar fashion, the misericords in Norwich Cathedral are shewn to be of two different periods by the plan of their seats.

Taking the seat-plan as criterion of date, the misericords fall into three main groups. I. The first comprises roughly those of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries; in this the seats are simple in plan; at the sides they are usually concave; in front they are straight or concave or more rarely convex. Examples occur in Chichester Cathedral and Hospital; Cockington, Devon; Ely, Exeter and Gloucester Cathedrals; Higham Ferrers, Hereford Cathedral and All Saints' church; Lavenham, Suffolk; Lynn St Margaret; Malvern; Norwich Cathedral; Ripple, Gloucester; Sutton Courtney, Berks.; Wells, Worcester and Winchester Cathedrals; Winchester College; Worle, Somerset.

II. The second group comprises roughly those of the fifteenth century and of the sixteenth century up to the Dissolution. They are more complicated on plan, having four, five or six sides, either straight or curving. Many of the earlier seats had had a hollow curve; this second set has normally a projecting point in front; the addition of which provided below more scope for the carver. Examples occur at Aylsham, Norfolk; Beverley Minster and St Mary's church; Brampton, Hunts.; King's College, Cambridge; Carlisle Cathedral; Cartmel; Chester Cathedral; Durham Castle; Faversham, Kent; Fordham and Gamlingay, Cambs.; Tansor, Northants; Leighton Buzzard; Lincoln Minster; Ludlow;

Lynn St Nicholas; Manchester Cathedral; Maidstone; Norwich Cathedral; All Souls', Oxford; Peterborough Cathedral; Richmond; Ripon Minster; Rothwell; St David's; Stratford-on-Avon; Throwley, Kent; Westminster; Windsor; York Minster.

Of this group there is a variant, which differs in having a straight side and not a point in front. In some cases the misericords are contemporaneous with those mentioned above; in others they seem to be rather earlier. Examples occur at Bakewell; Bishop's Stortford; Bristol Cathedral; Gayton, Northants; Higham Ferrers; Minster in Thanet; Sherborne; Tong, Salop; and Wellingborough.

III. The third group includes most of those of Post-Reformation date, which revert to the simple plan of seat, usually from motives of economy. Examples are Christchurch, where the plan of the seat has probably been assimilated to that of a number of thirteenth century misericords which remained in use there; Wimborne and Durham Cathedral. A few rude misericords also of the second group retain the early simple form, doubtless also for reasons of economy; *e.g.*, Swine, Yorkshire.

The edge of the seat is of course always rounded, with a view to the comfort of the occupant; and in some of the earlier misericords this is about all that is done in the way of molding; *e.g.*, at Exeter (205) and Hemingborough. In the latest examples the tendency is to increase the number of moldings considerably; *e.g.*, at Norwich (2), Beverley Minster (37) and Manchester (23). But exceptions occur, so that simplicity or elaboration of molding must not be accepted by itself as a criterion of date; *e.g.*, the sixteenth century moldings of the Westminster misericords are very simple, whereas those of Bristol (72), which are *c.* 1520, are of very elaborate character. Sometimes a difference of molding argues a difference of date; *e.g.*, in Norwich Cathedral (2, 11). But it may argue, not a difference of date, but a difference of workman; *e.g.*, at Chester one man, a splendid craftsman, carved many of the seats and put his own set of moldings on them (15); another, an inferior craftsman, employed a different set of moldings. Against this we may set the fact that sometimes a craftsman varied his molds; *e.g.*, at Ripon the two carvings of Jonah are undoubtedly by the same hand; yet the moldings differ (140). On the whole much caution has to be exercised in drawing deductions from the similarity or dissimilarity of molds. It is better to pay attention to the moldings of the stall-back and its elbow-rests than to those of the seat. With so much carving below of foliage and figures, ornamentation other than molding

was not required; nevertheless all the misericords of Beverley Minster have a scalloped ornament (196); and on those of Lincoln Minster tiny roses are carved (78). The upper roll or the rounded edge of the seat is usually continued on to the supporters; but in a few cases, *e.g.*, Higham Ferrers (221) and St Nicholas, Lynn (68), two rolls are continued. In a few instances workmen's marks are found on misericords; *e.g.*, at Exeter and Ludlow. Almost always the stall-backs and elbow-rests are of wood, not of cold stone; but at Walpole St Peter, Norfolk, and St Swithin, Norwich, the seats rest on stone supports. At Denton and King's Sutton, Northants, both stalls and seats are of stone; in the former there are seven, in the latter twelve.*

A misericord of normal design had a centrepiece flanked by supporters. It was some time before the carvers fully recognised the importance of the supporters; they are emphasised more in the thirteenth century misericords of Exeter than in the examples at the beginning of the next century in Chichester and Winchester Cathedrals, where the supporters are bunched up close to the centrepiece. Perhaps most elaboration was bestowed on the supporters in Winchester Cathedral, where they are larger than the centrepiece; and at Westminster, where they are *c.* 1509; in an example at Lavenham the supporters have actually crowded out the centrepiece. In a few churches the supporter is omitted altogether. This is the case at Wakefield Cathedral; Soham, Cambs.; Swine, Yorkshire; King's College, Cambridge; Wimborne Minster and Durham Cathedral. In some cases only the tip of the bracket supporting the ledge is carved; *e.g.*, at Sutton Courtney, Berks., and Soham, Cambs., and Wingfield, Suffolk; or the bracket form is more or less retained, as at Fordham, Cambs.; Tilney All Saints', Norfolk; King's College, Cambridge, and Wimborne Minster. In very few cases are all the misericords alike; as at Wingfield, Suffolk, and at Lincoln College, Oxford.

In foreign examples the supporters are usually absent; and this is occasionally so in England, *e.g.*, at Gloucester (80).

Very frequently there is no connection between the subject of the centrepiece and those of the supporters. There are, however, interesting exceptions. At Exeter a centaur shoots a dragon-headed supporter (13). The Ely harriers occupy both supporters and the centrepiece (100); and at Ely also the representations of St Giles (153) and of St John Baptist (144) occupy all three. So domestic bliss may be represented in the supporters, and domestic infelicity in the centrepiece, or *vice versa*. In

* Cox and Harvey, 260.

Beverley Minster one supporter portrays the vice of avarice, the other that of drink; in the centrepiece a devil is carrying a lost soul to hell. The most elaborate sequence perhaps exists at Lincoln, where the first three scenes are portrayed on the stall (the Precentor's) above. (1) Two monkeys are churning; (2) a monkey has stolen a pat of butter and is hiding in a tree; (3) the thief is hanged; the churners hauling at the rope, and the culprit with clasped hands saying his last prayer; (4) on the misericord below, the thief's corpse is being carried to burial by the executioners.

Originally there were no doubt many sequences in the misericords, but they have been subjected to so many changes that in few cases has the sequence been preserved. Thus at Westminster a pair of misericords, now separated, probably originally adjoined; in the one the devil is seizing a monastic miser, whose money is dropping out of his bag; in another a devil is hauling him off, bag and all, to hell. At Bristol there is a long sequence from the romance of *Reynard the Fox*, which has recently been restored to its proper order.

CHAPTER XXIX

CRITERIA OF DATE

IT is often difficult to fix the chronology of a misericord; the following data may be useful.

(1) In a few cases the date is carved; at Ripon there are misericords inscribed with the dates 1489 and 1494. On a misericord in Beverley Minster is the date 1520.

(2) The name of the donor of the stall or stalls is sometimes given; *e.g.*, the names of several of the canons of Beverley Minster

Worle

appear on the misericords beneath their stalls. Sometimes only the initials appear, as at Worle, Somerset (215), where the initials are those of Richard Spring, Prior of Worspring and Vicar of Worle, 1499-1516. At Minster are the initials J. C.; John Curteys or Curtis was rector there from 1401 to 1419. At Richmond the stalls were brought from Easby Abbey; what was there the abbot's stall has a shield with a *tun* and the letters BA pierced by a crosier, and surmounted by a scroll inscribed ABBAS; this is the rebus of Abbot Bampton, whose election

was confirmed in 1515. On a misericord at Lynn St Margaret there is the head of the Black Prince and his badge, the ostrich feathers; he died in 1376.

(3) Heraldry often occurs, and enables one to fix the name of the donor of the misericord. At Wellingborough on the elbow-rest of a stall is a shield with the arms of White; John White was rector from 1361 to 1392. And since Crowland Abbey, to whom the church belonged, was ordered in 1383 to repair the chancel, it follows that the stalls were probably put up after 1383, and before the death of Parson White in 1392. At Wakefield on a misericord is a couple of owls, the crest of the Savile family, and a shield with the arms impaled of Thomas Savile and Margaret Basworth, who were married in 1482. In Durham Castle chapel are stalls which were put up in the chapel of Auckland Castle by Bishop Ruthall (1508-1522), whose arms are carved on a superb bench-end; these misericords were removed to Durham Castle by Bishop Tunstall. At Maidstone are the arms of Archbishop Courtenay, including the archiepiscopal pallium; he made the church collegiate in 1395.

(4) In several cases we know the name of the donor who gave the stalls, and the presumption is that the misericords were made at the same time as the stalls. At Lincoln, the Treasurer, John de Welbourne, who died in 1380, is styled "inceptor et consultor inceptionis facturae stallorum novorum in ecclesia cathedrali Lincolniensi"; he was treasurer from about 1350 to 1380. At Cartmel the stalls were put up by Prior William de Waltona, but his date is uncertain; more than one William Walton was Prior. At Manchester the stalls were given in 1508 by Warden Stanley, afterwards Bishop Stanley, with the aid of a merchant, Richard Beck. At Christchurch the stalls, with their Renaissance panelling, were given by Prior William Eyre (1502-1520); those misericords which have scrolls of classic leafage are part of the same work. At Wimborne the stalls were given in 1608 by the Bankers family. The directions of Bishop Cosin for misericords to be placed in his chapel at Bishop Auckland are still extant.

"Six chairs of wainscot gross work to be placed on the insides of the screen within Auckland chapel, on the right and left hand, in the middle aisle, and to be made of the fashion of the chairs now in the chapel at Durham castle. . . . The seats must be to turn up, with a little seat when turned up, and carving underneath it."*

(5) Again, when a quire was rebuilt on a grander scale, new

* "Bishop Cosin's Correspondence," quoted by J. T. Fowler in *Notes and Queries*, 4, xi. 459.

stalls and misericords were usually provided. In such a case the misericords are not likely to be earlier than the rebuilding of the quire. This helps us to the dates of several sets of misericords. Ely quire was begun in 1322, and there is documentary evidence that the stalls were begun in 1338. Wells quire was partly remodelled, partly rebuilt, between 1329 and 1363; the stalls were begun in 1325, and several were still unfinished in 1337. The rebuilding of Malvern quire was completed *c.* 1480. The remodelling of Gloucester quire was finished *c.* 1350. The quire of York Minster was rebuilt between 1380 and 1400. Again, at Sherborne, in 1436 there was a great riot because the monks had restricted the right of access to the parish font in the nave of the abbey church, and the townsmen set fire to the church; very much damage was done, as is still evident from the marks of fire on the piers; the stalls would doubtless be destroyed by the fire; so we may conclude that the present stalls are the ones erected soon after 1436. N. Walsham church was destroyed in the peasant rising of 1381; the stalls therefore are probably soon after that date. The same reasoning applies to misericords placed in a chapel; they are not likely to be earlier than the building or rebuilding of the chapel. Winchester College chapel is part of the work of William Wykeham, 1387-1393. St Mary's hospital at Chichester was built *c.* 1290, and the stalls would be wanted at once. Lynn St Nicholas was rebuilt *c.* 1415. The chapel of All Souls' College, Oxford, was consecrated in 1442. The chapel of King's College, Cambridge, was being completed in 1515. Henry the Seventh's chapel at Westminster was incomplete at his death in 1509. The chapel of Lincoln College, Oxford, was consecrated in 1631. But this criterion is not infallible, *e.g.*, the misericords at New College, Oxford, are much later than the completion of the college in 1386. On the other hand the misericords at Cartmel are much earlier than the canopies above them, which are of Renaissance character.

(6) Again, in large parishes a church was often made collegiate; *i.e.*, it was supplied with a staff of several rectors, secular canons, instead of one; and for their accommodation additional stall work was required; it is important therefore to know the date when churches became collegiate. Here are a few, possessing misericords. Ottery St Mary, Devon, became collegiate in 1337; Sudbury St Gregory and Wingfield, Suffolk, in 1362; Irthlingborough, Northants, in 1376; All Saints', Maidstone, in 1395; Higham Ferrers in 1415; Tong, Salop, between 1401 and 1411. The quire of the collegiate church of Fotheringhay was built in 1415; on its ruin its stalls were moved to neighbouring churches; Hemington has ten of them; others

are at Benefield and Tansor.* At Nantwich the church was made collegiate between 1327 and 1333. Ludlow became collegiate in the latter part of the fourteenth century.

(7) If we cannot fix the date of the misericords, we can sometimes fix the date of the stalls and canopies by the architectural and other ornament which they contain; and the presumption is that the misericords also are of this date, *e.g.*, in Winchester cathedral the design of the stalls is closely akin to the design in stone which was in vogue *c.* 1305; and we may accept that date both for stalls and misericords. But it may be that the canopies were put up later; at Carlisle thirty years later; at Cartmel some two centuries later. At Exeter the stalls and misericords are of the thirteenth century; on

Higham Ferrers

them Sir Gilbert Scott put tabernacled canopies of fifteenth century type.

(8) It has already been mentioned that in a large number of the later misericords the seat is of complex plan and is usually pointed in front. Seats of this plan have a definite range. Among them are the following, of which approximate dates are given: Lincoln, 1370; Hemington, 1415; York, 1390; Maidstone, Higham Ferrers and Lynn St Nicholas, 1415; All Souls', Oxford, 1442; Norwich cathedral, the later stalls, 1480; Aylsham, Norfolk, 1507; Manchester, 1508; Westminster, 1509; Durham Castle, 1512; Faversham, 1533; King's College,

* *English Church Furniture*, 257.

Cambridge, 1534. From these dates it is fair to infer that when this type of misericord occurs, it is not earlier than 1370.

(9) As has been pointed out above, the character of the foliage employed is very significant; it provides us with a series of periods (*a*) with conventional, (*b*) with naturalistic, (*c*) with bulbous foliage, (*d*) with a square or lozenge-shaped leaf, (*e*) with complicated and novel types of leaf, bloom and seed vessel.

(10) Occasionally the ornament employed has a definite time-limit; *e.g.*, the ball-flower ornament which occurs at Sutton Courteney, Berks., is most common in stone carving between *c.* 1307 and *c.* 1327.

(11) Occasionally the subject is significant, *e.g.*, at Exeter the carving of the elephant fixes that particular misericord as later than 1255; and as no items for the cost of the misericords appear in the Exeter Fabric Rolls, which commence in 1279, we may assume that the Exeter misericords were mostly carved between 1255 and 1279.

(12) Armour occurs not infrequently, and is a valuable indication of date, *e.g.*, the flat-topped helmets seen on the Exeter misericords (77) resemble those of the effigies in the Temple church, London, and are of early date. At Chester the armour of the knights belongs to the period of the Jupon and Camail or Mail Gorget, which was in use in the latter part of the reign of Edward III. and in that of Richard II. (50, 76). At Worcester also the armour is of the same period; but the gorgets appear to be of plate, though these may conceal the camail; the costume of the supporters is distinctly that usual in the fourteenth century. At Norwich is a man-at-arms; probably of the last half of the fourteenth century (2).

In doubtful cases the following may be consulted:—

MEYRICK, S. R. *Inquiry into Ancient Armour.* 3 vols. 1824.

HEWITT, J. *Ancient Armour in Europe to the Seventeenth Century.* 3 vols. 1885.

DRUITT. *Costume on Monumental Brasses.* London 1906.

(13) Costume is a still more valuable help; not everybody wore armour, but everybody wore some kind of clothes. But an important point must be borne in mind; viz., that the people represented are for the most part quite common folk, whose costume cannot be identified by studying the dress of knights and ladies. Of the latter, however, there are examples; *e.g.*, the horned headdress or "hennin" at Ludlow (180) and Tansor (220), which was most in fashion between 1430 and 1440. The Ludlow scold and the centrepiece and right supporter at

Tansor wear the hennin with a veil; the left supporter in the latter without a veil. On brasses the range of the hennin is about 1420 to 1440. At Ludlow the right supporter holds up a mirror for the scold to behold her beauty. At Higham Ferrers the right supporter wears the "chaperon" or hood twisted up over the head; the left supporter has the "crespine" headdress; both were in vogue in the early years of the fifteenth century (221). At Malvern the personage may be either ecclesiastical or academical; he wears a curious flat cap, and a cape with a hood attached; the dress appears to belong to the latter half of the fifteenth century (117). At Ripple is seen the pedimental headdress which was in vogue from *c.* 1490 to *c.* 1560 (121). At Ludlow is a man in a hood with a gypcière or pouch,

Tansor

which may be late fourteenth or early fifteenth century (90). At St David's the man on the right has a bag-sleeved girdled gown; this is probably between 1450 and 1480 (87). At Carlisle the costume, being caricatured, is difficult to date. It may be either temp. Richard II., or it may belong to the last half of the fifteenth century (179). The Carlisle stalls are stated to have been put up *c.* 1401.

At Worcester in the Judgment of Solomon the two mothers wear the flat headdress which is seen on the brass of Lady Malyns in Chinnor church, Oxon.; she died in 1385.* The style of drapery looks like that of the late fourteenth century. In Chichester cathedral is an important misericord, in which the

* Illustrated in Macklin's *Brasses*, 51.

dexter supporter wears the same headdress as a "weeper" on the tomb of John of Eltham (*ob.* 1334) in Westminster Abbey; it is also seen on the effigies of ladies at Aldworth, Ryther, and Ifield, where the armour of the accompanying knights is nearer 1300 than 1350. The headdress of the sinister supporter is earlier than 1340, when the true *nebule* came into fashion. With this Chichester headdress may be paralleled that of a Madonna at Lichfield, *c.* 1300; those of effigies at Abergavenny, *c.* 1320; and that on a head-corbel on the later of the two tombs of the Alards at Winchelsea.* Judging by the evidence afforded by these two headdresses, the misericord may be given the approximate date of 1320. But as some of the misericords in the cathedral are of later character than this, we may give to the whole set an

Higham Ferrers

approximate date of 1330; no doubt the work was spread over several years (139).

As regards the men, two other criteria may be mentioned; one has regard to the fashion of dressing the hair, the other to that of their footwear. As to the *hair;* from *c.* 1325 to *c.* 1400, the hair was worn long and wavy, but became shorter towards the end of the fourteenth century; the size of the head and the ears is usually exaggerated, as in several of the Ely examples; the beard may be either pointed or forked, *e.g.*, at Ely (144), or the face may be clean shaven, as at Worcester (92). From *c.* 1400 to *c.* 1430 the hair is short, a moustache is common, and the curious forked beard prevails; *e.g.*, at Higham Ferrers (221).

* For particulars as to the Chichester headdresses I am indebted to Mr E. S. Prior.

From *c.* 1430 to *c.* 1480 the hair was worn short by the upper classes, and was cut in an ugly fashion so as to form a roll on the top of the head; the face is clean shaven. From *c.* 1475 to *c.* 1565 the hair was worn long again, and the face was clean shaven; *e.g.*, at Malvern (117). In all the misericords of Beverley Minster (1520), except two, the face is clean shaven. As for *shoes*, from *c.* 1325 to *c.* 1483 the pointed shoe prevailed; it is well seen in the Worcester tournament (159). From *c.* 1464 to *c.* 1565 low, broad shoes were worn, clumsy and loose in appearance; *e.g.*, at Ripple (117). These shoes, no doubt, as well as pointed ones, were worn by common folk from *c.* 1325 to *c.* 1483 also.

On this subject the following may be consulted:

PLANCHÉ, J. R. *History of Costume.* 1847.

FAIRHOLT, F. W. *Costume in England.* Edited by Hon. H. F. Dillon. London, 1885.

DRUITT, C. *Costume on Monumental Brasses.* London, 1906.

CLINCH, G. *English Costume.* London, 1909.

(14) Another test consists of the comparison of undated with dated examples. If we find identity of subject and treatment, especially if the subject be an unusual one, the presumption is that the undated set is of the same period as the dated one, or nearly so. If the subject be a usual one, the coincidence is not worth much; *e.g.*, Worcester and Malvern are within sight of one another; both were Benedictine churches, and both have misericords with seats similar in plan. Both have representations of the sower, the weeder and the swineherd; it does not follow, however, that one borrowed from the other, or that the same set of carvers executed both sets; for these personages occur all over the country, and no doubt are borrowed not from one another, but from a common source; viz., the traditional representations of the months and the operations of agriculture. On the other hand representations of the scriptural subject of the spies bearing a big bunch of grapes from Canaan are very rare; they occur in two pro-cathedrals, Beverley and Ripon, of the same diocese, both served by secular canons; the presumption is then that there is some connection between the two sets of misericords. The connection is not probably that they were executed by the same carvers, for the Beverley misericords are very late, A.D. 1520, moreover the carving at Ripon is on a far higher artistic level than at Beverley; but that the Beverley examples are inferior copies of the Ripon work. This is borne out by the fact that unusual types of plant form which occur

at Ripon are repeated, and again by an inferior hand, at Beverley. At Manchester (23), Chester (15) and Carlisle (62) are most vigorous representations of fights between a lion and a dragon; one would say that they must be by the same man, and he a master hand; unfortunately there is an equally vigorous carving in stone of the same scene on the Percy tomb in Beverley Minster, which is *c.* 1340. On the whole there is comparatively little evidence of copying of design; the style of work in the misericords is individual; and there is but little evidence of peripatetic schools or gangs of carvers; the strongest case for this probably would be at Manchester, Chester and Carlisle, in all of which genuine masterpieces were produced; but in these there are considerable divergences of date. The evidence strongly tends to the idea that, as regards the greater churches, each church got its woodwork carved by local men. In the case of small parish churches, such as those in Norfolk, where stalls and misericords are exceptionally numerous and where the work is often of great excellence, we may be pretty sure that they employed the carvers of some important centre, such as Norwich; in fact, their stalls and misericords were "shop-made"; just as were Purbeck fonts and alabaster effigies and "tables," and even great stone reredoses such as that of Durham. When, however, we meet such work as that at Weston-in-Gordano, Somerset, we may be pretty sure that the village carpenter was employed (63). The infrequence of stereotyping of design adds immensely to the interest of mediæval wood carving as seen in the misericords. Those of Exeter do not prepare one for those of Ely, nor those of Gloucester for those of Worcester, nor those of Westminster for those of Beverley Minster, and so with the rest. This is the more remarkable and commendable because the very reverse is the case with the tabernacled stalls above; probably even among experts hardly a man could be found who could discriminate from memory the tabernacle work of Lincoln, Chester, Manchester, Carlisle, and others that might be mentioned.

CHAPTER XXX

ENUMERATION OF MISERICORDS

A VAST number of misericords remain, especially in collegiate and monastic churches. Lists of them are given by Mr Wildridge, page 7; Miss Phipson, page 119; and Messrs Cox and Harvey, page 259. But it is impossible to catalogue all the misericords in the parish churches; in many parts of Norfolk and Suffolk one finds examples in almost every church visited, however small and remote.

In respect of excellence of carving the Northern misericords surpass all others, especially those of Ripon, Chester, Manchester and Carlisle, of which it would well repay modern carvers to make careful study. Those of Norwich cathedral also rank high. Those of Exeter and Wells cathedrals are early and admirable examples.

As regards interest of subject rather than excellence of execution, the misericords in Beverley Minster and Beverley St Mary; Ely; Worcester; New College, Oxford; Lincoln; Boston deserve special mention. The largest collections of misericords are as follows: 118 at King's College, Cambridge; 108 in Lincoln Minster; 98 in St George's, Windsor; 68 in Beverley Minster, and 28 in Beverley St Mary's; 68 in Winchester Cathedral and Henry the Seventh's chapel at Westminster; 64 at Boston and Wells; 62 in Norwich Cathedral and New College, Oxford; 60 in Gloucester and Hereford Cathedrals; 50 at Exeter, Ely, and Chester; 46 at Carlisle; 42 in All Souls', Oxford; 40 in Chichester Cathedral and 24 in St Mary's Hospital; 38 at Hexham; 36 at Hexham and Manchester; 32 in Durham Cathedral and Ludlow; 28 in St David's, Bristol Cathedral, Leighton Buzzard and Bishop Auckland; 26 at Cartmel; 25 at Nantwich; 24 at Abergavenny and Malvern; 20 at Bakewell, Maidstone and Higham Ferrers; 18 at St Paul's, Bedford; Winchester College chapel, Bishop Stortford, Minster in Thanet, Whalley, and Tilney All Saints'; 16 at Brancepeth, in the chapel of Sherburn Hospital, Durham, and Canon Pyon, Herefordshire; Faversham; Richmond, Yorkshire; and Lynn

St Margaret; besides considerable numbers at Sherborne, Darlington, Brancepeth, Tewkesbury, Lancaster, Stratford-on-Avon, Ottery St Mary, Wimborne, Durham Castle chapel, Anstey, Herts., Hemington, Northants, and elsewhere. The above figures, however, are not always correct; in several cases they include modern examples. Many ancient misericords have been turned out of churches in modern restorations.

Of the misericords the most ancient set remaining is that at Exeter of the middle of the thirteenth century; those formerly in the quire of Westminster Abbey would be of contemporaneous date. Of desks we have those of Rochester of the year 1227. Of stalls there survives a charming thirteenth-century example at Hemingborough, Yorkshire; at Ratzburg, however, near Lubeck,* there are stalls of the twelfth century; their backs are not rounded; they are made like arm-chairs, with straight elbow-rests. At Hastières† and Gendron-Celles, both near Dinant, Belgium, are simple stalls of the thirteenth century.

* Illustrated by Maeterlinck, 11.
† Illustrated by Maeterlinck, 12.

CHAPTER XXXI

CHRONOLOGY OF MISERICORDS

IN the following list such approximate dates are given as may be known with more or less certainty.

THIRTEENTH CENTURY.

Exeter - -	1255-1279	Hemingborough.	
Chichester Hospital -	1290	Christchurch.	

FOURTEENTH CENTURY.

Winchester Cathedral	1305	Hereford Cathedral -	1380
Sutton Courteney -	1320	Hereford All Saints' -	1380
Chichester Cathedral -	1330	Wellingborough -	1385
Wells Cathedral -	1330	Leighton Buzzard -	1385[2]
Ely Cathedral - -	1338	Ludlow (8) - -	1389[3]
Lancaster - - -	1340	Boston - - -	1390
Gloucester Cathedral -	1345	Winchester College -	1390
Fordham - - -	1350[1]	Chester Cathedral -	1390
London, St Katherine's	1350[1]	Nantwich - - -	1390
Wingfield - - -	1362	York Minster - -	1390
Sudbury St George -	1362	Norwich Cathedral -	1390
Lincoln Minster -	1370	North Walsham -	1390
Lynn St Margaret -	1370	Maidstone - -	1395
Irthlingborough -	1376	Worcester Cathedral -	1397
Abergavenny - -	1380		

Late Fourteenth Century.

Brampton.	Stowlangtoft.
Cartmel.	

FIFTEENTH CENTURY.

Bedford St Paul's -	1400[1]	Minster - - -	1410
Swine - - -	1400[2]	Tong - -	1410
Carlisle - - -	1401	Hemington - -	1415
Northill - - -	1405[2]	Benefield - - -	1415
Beddington - -	1410[1]	Tansor - - -	1415

FIFTEENTH CENTURY (*continued*).

Higham Ferrers	1415	Throwley	1450[1]
Lynn St Nicholas	1415	Windsor	1460
Maidstone	1415	Cawston	1460[1]
Tilney All Saints'	1420[1]	St David's	1470
Walpole St Peter	1420[1]	Malvern	1480
Bishop Stortford	1420[1]	Oxford, New College	1480
Bakewell	1420[2]	Rotherham	1480[4]
Norwich Cathedral	1420	Wakefield	1480
Gamlingay	1420[2]	Ripon	1490
Hexham	1425	Fairford	1490[5]
Ludlow	1435	Halifax.	
Whalley	1435	Kidlington	
Sherborne	1436	Limerick.	
Oxford, All Souls'	1442	Peterborough.	
Beverley St Mary	1445	Ripple.	
Tattershall	1450	Sall.	
Swinbrook	1450[1]		

SIXTEENTH CENTURY.

Richmond, Yorks.	1500	Beverley Minster	1520
Gayton, Northants	1500[2]	Bristol Cathedral	1520
Aylsham, Norfolk	1507[6]	Aberdeen	1520
Manchester Cathedral	1508	Dunblane	1520
Westminster	1509	Faversham	1533[1]
Worle, Somerset	1509	Cambridge, King's College	1533
Durham Castle	1512	Halsall.	
Christchurch, Hants.	1515		

SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.

Wimborne	1608	Oxford, Lincoln College	1631
Cartmel	1620	Durham Cathedral	1665
Passenham	1628[1]	Bishop Auckland	1665
Brancepeth	1630[7]		

NOTES.

[1] Miss Phipson. *Choir Stalls and their Carving.*
[2] Messrs Cox and Hervey. *English Church Furniture.*
[3] Thomas Wright's *Guide to Ludlow.*
[4] Probably due to Archbishop Rotherham of York, 1480-1501.
[5] Leland in Carbonnell's *Fairford Church.*
[6] The chancel screen of Aylsham is dated 1507.
[7] The work in this church was done between 1626 and 1633, by John Cosin, afterwards Bishop of Durham in 1660.

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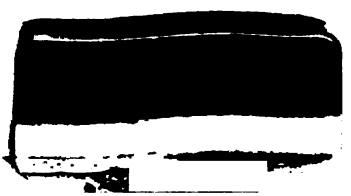

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